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With kind regards,

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THOMAS À BECKET,

AND

Other Poems.

BY PATRICK SCOTT.

LONDON :

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

1853.

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TO

JOHN HUGHES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "PROVENCE AND THE RHONE," &c.

The following Poem,

COMMENCED AT HIS SUGGESTION AND COMPLETED

WITH HIS APPROVAL,

IS DEDICATED

BY HIS OBLIGED FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

\* Vide Introduction to "Quentin Durward," p. liv. Edit. 1836.



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Thomas A Becket.

## Persons Represented.

---

HENRY II.

THOMAS A BECKET, *Archbishop of Canterbury.*

WILLIAM OF PAVIA, *Cardinal of St. Peter's.*

OTHO, *Cardinal of St. Nicotas.*

ROGER, *Archbishop of York.*

GILBERT FOLIOT, *Bishop of London.*

JOSCELIN, *Bishop of Salisbury.*

HENRY, *Bishop of Winchester.*

PETER OF NISMES, *Friend of William of Pavia.*

JOHN OF SALISBURY, *Secretary to Becket.*

THE DEAN OF BOULOGNE.

RANULF DE BROU, *a Norman Baron.*

WILLIAM DE TRACY.

RICHARD BRITO.

REGINALD FITZURSE.

HUGH DE MOREVILLE.

} *Knights, attendant on Henry.*

LORDS, &c.

*Ditto.*

FATHER OF AGNES.

RICHARD BLOIS, *a Norman.*

CUTBERT, *a Military Retainer of Ranulf de Broc.*

TUNGSTAN, *attendant of Becket.*

*Monks, Crowd, &c.*

AGNES.

MATILDA.

# THOMAS À BECKET.

---

SCENE I.—*Road to Canterbury.*

*Tungstan and Cuthbert.*

TUNGSTAN.

'Tis a long way to Canterbury.

CUTHBERT.

True !

So we have felt it—yet your master, Tungstan,  
Found a short cut to the archbishopric !  
But, courage, comrade ; lo ! the rising towers  
Of the old cathedral mock the wayfarer  
With a false show of nearness.

TUNGSTAN.

So appear  
The heights of Heav'n to those who deem they have  
them  
In fetch of a quick walk.

CUTHBERT.

Which saw suits best,—  
Or priest, or soldier? The hard labourer  
In battle's field sweats to discomfiture  
Of limb or life, that saintly stay-at-homes  
May stretch their easy length, mouthing the fruits  
Of their well-guarded acres, and absolve  
The crimes of such world-wanderers as myself,  
Who sin to make their comfort !

TUNGSTAN.

Worthy friend !  
Doth *that* man stay at home, but now returning  
From seven long years of mortal banishment ?

CUTHBERT.

But he supports a system which itself  
Supports a hundred idlers in the sun,  
For one who digs i' the vineyard—'tis the same.



TUNGSTAN.

Cuthbert ! thou know'st I ne'er was bless'd at school  
With wit of words, or a contentious tongue ;  
Yet have I more—

CUTHBERT.

In what ?

TUNGSTAN.

A heart to love  
One who is worthy of it all—*who* more  
Than the Lord Becket, tell me, the good Primate  
Of this religious land ?

CUTHBERT.

Henry the King !  
The royal head of this most warlike land !

TUNGSTAN.

Who had an arm more strongly nerved than Becket ?  
Who had a heart more firmly set than Becket,  
In the bewildering din which soldiers love  
And call it glory ?

CUTHBERT.

True ; it *was* so, Tungstan.  
More shame for him, that doffing coat of steel  
With the priest's garb he donn'd another temper.

Why doth he thwart the King? why throw the Church  
Like a vast shadow o'er the path which Henry  
Would disinherit of the ancient rubbish  
That blocks the light?

TUNGSTAN.

Speak plainly—what's the light  
You hint at?

CUTHBERT.

Hint at! truly it would spend  
A summer's day, to read the muster-roll  
Of all the wrongs in State or Church, which Henry  
Hath warr'd with to the life: take this alone  
As a similitude of other things  
And of another kind, which now we see—  
That two weak travellers, like you and me,  
Can thread these winding roads, nor fear such risk  
As at each brake and turn would have sprung out  
Upon our forceful path, in the good times  
Of custom'd lawlessness.

TUNGSTAN.

That man does more  
Who clears the way to an immortal home,  
With heav'n-directed hand!

CUTHBERT.

Who clears the way  
Must tread the path himself—who knows he knows it ?  
Here, our sure senses can at least discern  
The benefit we wot of. Say besides,  
Who is't that would defend the land he loves  
With her own children's arms, and oust the herd  
Of fierce <sup>(1)</sup>\* Brabançons, ready for all work  
That bids the best for blood ?

TUNGSTAN.

And was not Becket  
The first who started this ?

CUTHBERT.

More shame, I say,  
To leave the good cause now ! Once side by side  
He fought with royal Henry 'gainst the oppressor ;  
But now he quits the field, or frowns defiance  
From his contemptuous height, while Henry stoops  
To untie the vassal's limbs.

TUNGSTAN.

The lowest serf  
Who takes on him new duties, and performs  
The Church's ministrations, from that hour

\* See Notes at the end of this Poem.

Casts off the heavy slough of his old life,  
And breathes in liberty, and walks in pow'r.  
'Tis this which makes our English hearts twine round  
The pillar of the Church—that Church which still,  
Like a good mother, 'bout her meanest son  
Throws her strong arms, from which secure he gazes  
With glance to glance upon the castled Norman.

## CUTHBERT.

Nay ; you've become a minstrel *since* your schoolhood,  
Good Tungstan ! But bethink thee, wer't not better  
To rase the castle, that its dangerous owner  
May lack the possibility of Pow'r,  
When Pow'r is wrong, and let the vassal out  
Free in himself and his own right to run  
No risk of changing chains ? The serf, you say,  
Turn'd into priest is free ; *all* should be free :  
Now, 'twere a pretty world, gramercy, Tungstan,  
If all in it were priests ! Bah ! let me ask,  
What makes the robber Arab scour the desert,  
But that there crawls some peaceful traveller there ?  
Priests prey not on their kind.

## TUNGSTAN.

The Primate preys  
On nothing but himself—how greatly that !

On his own thoughts by day ; his rest i' the night :  
Ay, on the flesh on which the holy scourge  
Venges the spirit's quarrel.

CUTHBERT.

More fool he  
With such a form to shrine a woman's worship !

TUNGSTAN.

He's pure—has made a covenant with his eyes,  
And every day does penance—

CUTHBERT.

—As Archbishop  
For sins of the unsainted Chancellor ! <sup>(2)</sup>

TUNGSTAN.

'Tis false !—*his* sins ! Hadst thou as few to reckon  
Thou hadst one foot in Heav'n !

CUTHBERT.

Would he had both !  
Far better there, than on the soil of England !  
Why comes he here, to teach men's minds to wrestle  
In hatred ? Brother gives the fall to brother—  
And wherefore ?—to be crown'd or curs'd at Rome !  
Methinks such weeds as these are not the flow'rs

Which the good man should plant on earth, and gather  
To scent his clothes in Heav'n !

TUNGSTAN.

His foes press on him—  
It is their fault, I say : *he* seeks the honour  
Of God, and of his order.

CUTHBERT.

Doubtless, Tungstan,  
They are the same. Most pious juggler !

TUNGSTAN.

What ?

Seven years of abstinent absence ! juggler he !  
His enemies are mine.

*[He walks apart, and sits down, with his head  
leaning on his hand.]*

CUTHBERT.

Poor Tungstan ! he is faithful : where's the wonder ?  
They say this man of God hath such a tongue  
'Twould oil the rustiest temper till it work'd  
Right smoothly to the key of policy.

*[Looking kindly at Tungstan.]*

True to his colours, that's a merit !—fool,  
If so, he is an honest one ; his heart  
Does duty for his head. I love his face,

With all its dear affectionate ugliness.  
Come, Tungstan ! *We'll* not quarrel ; let the King  
And Primate have their bout—your hand, man, come,  
The Church sha'n't part old friends.

TUNGSTAN.

Nay—promise first—

Think better of my master !

CUTHBERT.

I will try it

For your sake, Tungstan : there, shake hands ; and now  
I'm off to Saltwood.

TUNGSTAN.

I to Canterbury,

To make all ready for the pray'd-for coming  
Of my dear lord, who for these tedious years  
Hath lack'd my wonted service. I commend you  
To the good Virgin !

CUTHBERT.

And I you, kind Tungstan,  
To any saint you choose.

SCENE II.—*Chapter House of St. Paul's.*

*The Bishops of London, Winchester, <sup>(3)</sup> and Salisbury.*  
*The Archbishop of York.*

LONDON.

We must forestall, by countercharge to Rome,  
The threaten'd danger, and that quickly ; time  
Presses our steps against this man.

WINCHESTER.

Methinks

This man is an Archbishop, good my Lord,  
And may have right likewise to claim from us  
Some steps in his behalf.

LONDON.

From us, my Lord ?

WINCHESTER.

What hath he battled for, but Mother Church ;  
To lift her rank ; to gift with deeper root  
Her world-o'erspreading rights ? Hath he not borne  
The wrath of kings, the pangs of banishment,  
Serving high Heav'n, whose lowly ministers  
Are we ; and must he stand alone, to fight



The cause of friends, without one friendly arm  
To point a weapon, or to raise a shield  
For God or him !

## LONDON.

Indeed, this Becket—why  
Call him Archbishop ? His authority,  
The way he wields it, doth not fit the time,  
And quarrels with men's tempers—we renounce it !—  
Truly this Becket fights with weapons forg'd  
Of violent earth : his stubbornness of pride  
Is tougher than a hauberk, and his haste  
(Rebounding from a weak submissiveness) <sup>(4)</sup>  
Gleams like the axe of some blind warrior,  
Hewing both friend and foe.

## WINCHESTER.

His stubbornness  
Is the firm will that holds the tortured sense,  
Rigid in faith to the *Priest's* vow of office,  
Though *Prince* turn executioner.

## LONDON.

'Twas Becket  
(When Becket was a Chancellor) who tax'd  
The Church for his lord's battles.

## SALISBURY.

Ay ! 'twas Becket,  
When Becket was Archbishop, who consented  
To the King's customs, <sup>(5)</sup> which he flies at now  
As if the Devil had penn'd them.

## LONDON.

He will swamp  
Our order in the rash conflicting sea,  
Which his ambition stirs. The cause of truth,  
As of our office, asks for gentler means  
Whose seeming weakness works out strongest ends ;  
Bending to see more clearly how to rise,  
And letting go, to grasp more certainly  
When the hold is not felt.

## WINCHESTER.

These remedies  
Smell of the earth, and work for it. Heaven's cause  
Is not akin to that, which the shrewd world  
Hangs over in its thrifty counting-house,  
Of mere material loss or gain, admitting  
The balance be cast up, and winning items  
Put to its credit. The expedient tongue  
That lisps "Yea, yea," when it should shout out "Never,"  
Does so far soil the virgin purity

Of what it serves, as leaves the delicate thing  
Dishonour'd in its spirit, and scarce worth  
Or contest, or defence.

YORK.

Dost know the King ?

Doth he not hate this Becket with a hate  
Bred of sour'd love, and a remember'd sense  
Of benefits forgot ? Where's thy allegiance ?  
The Heav'n we serve plants Henry on the throne.  
And ranges us for subjects,—subjects are—

WINCHESTER.

*Such*, and not slaves. But much I fear *this* subject  
Is one on which I shall not rule your judgments.  
One word then as the sum. It seems most strange  
That we should frown upon our own Apostle,  
And disavow his tongue ;—should let our soldier  
Stand i' the gap, then hang upon the arm  
That strikes for us. Methinks, my Lord of London,  
My ear informs me that thy pleasant church  
Invites our presence.

SCENE III.—*Interior of the Church. Parties as before. Monks, &c. chanting.*

“ Like the precious ointment shed  
Upon Aaron’s holy head,  
Beard and sweeping garments dy’d  
In the sanctifying tide ;

“ Like the dews of Hermon falling  
Back to life dead Nature calling,  
So should brethren live, and so  
Streams of Love in fragrance flow.”

*Enter a muffled figure, who gives the Bishop of London  
a letter, and flies.*

LONDON (*reading*).

What’s this ? “ The humble Priest of Canterbury  
Unto ”—What have we ? “ Roger—York—Arch-  
bishop—

In name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
And of our Lady, ever bless’d and Virgin,  
And by the merits of the Angelic host,  
Cursed be—” Ah ! what are ye looking at ?  
On with the chanting !

[*Chant*, “ So let brethren dwell, and so—”

That lying music ! stop it !—love with him !  
Suspended ! Where's the wretch who brought this  
    missive ?

What think ye, heads of Israel ?

WINCHESTER.

Think, my Lord ?

We'd answer better, if we knew what shakes  
Thy holy calm.

LONDON.

May't please your Grace of York,  
Thou art put out, quench'd, buried, swept away  
From off the soil ; cast in a corner-heap,  
That passers-by shall turn their face away,  
And hold their nostrils, lest the smallest sense  
Be tainted by a thing so foul !

YORK.

I ! what ?

LONDON.

I say, thou'rt doubly curs'd—that thou must live  
To look on thy own death—that things of earth  
Shrink from thee, and the grave-pit shuts its jaws  
Against the *excommunicated* man.

YORK.

Me ! Who hath dared—?

LONDON.

Thy brother ! he who seeks  
The good of his own order—the good Becket !  
Our Church's champion !

SALISBURY.

And thyself, my Lord?

LONDON.

He hath suspended. Closer in, my Lords.  
What ! do ye think we can conceal this matter?  
Why did ye stop the chanting?

WINCHESTER.

'Tis too late ;  
The eyes of all are slanted here ; they scan  
The trouble of our motions. Thoughts of evil  
Are in their generation wondrous quick  
To reach conclusions.

LONDON.

Holy Winchester !  
What thinkest thou of thy Archbishop now ?

WINCHESTER.

'Tis rashly done.

LONDON.

Rash ! by the Lord I serve,  
If this rash Primate seeks for martyrdom,  
And a new cross will make another saint,  
I'll help him with a nail. My Lord of York,  
When thy stunn'd sense hath gotten life again,  
Thou must to Henry. Becket treads us down  
To lowest earth ; we'll see the better there  
To trip him where he stands !

SCENE IV.—*Sea-shore of Wissant (Coast of France).**Becket. Edward Grim.*

BECKET.

Who sides with us ? The very elements  
Make war on Becket. The contemptuous wind  
Puffs out its cheeks in rude opposing breath,  
On the lost shepherd who would seek his flock.  
Am I the Lord's anointed ?

GRIM.

Holy Father !  
Second to none, if not to him who sits  
As Peter's self.

BECKET.

And cannot I command  
These rebel waves to carry me to England ?

GRIM.

Wouldst thou 'twere giv'n to thee, this mighty power ?

BECKET.

No, not to man ; and least of men to me,  
The weakest of my brethren. Where were then  
(Had I authority o'er Nature's forms)  
The exact return of seasonable things  
To their appointment?—the unforced conclusion  
To the unobtrusive means ?—that calm clear order  
Which the hot hand of passion never shakes,  
Nor jealousy can foul ?

GRIM.

Yet, Holy Father,  
Much hast thou struggled with the angry workings  
Of a more difficult sea ; a storm-tost bark,  
Beaten from Rome to France, from France to England ;  
While they whose kindred duties pledged their hands  
To aid thee at the helm, or curb'd by fear,  
Or urged by baser hope of gain, withhold  
The cunning of their office—yet, how long ?



BECKET.

What if I thought that I alone was left  
To fight the fight of Heaven? What, if I said,  
“I have been very jealous for my God,  
And if I fall on the contending soil,  
Who then will raise the war-cry?” Impious fool!  
Hath the Lord God of Hosts such need of help  
That he must list a soldier like myself?  
Can He not summon myriads of arm’d pow’rs  
To shake the stone-ribb’d earth who ne’er have served  
Beneath the flag of Baal? Fool—ay, fool!  
What can the mote that dances in the beam  
(Seen only then) or hasten or inhibit  
The chariot of the sun?

GRIM.

The sun is single ;  
The earth hath lesser stars than him, and these  
Have paled before thee—ay, and yet shall blink,  
Confronted with the master-light that clothes  
Thy person and thy office.

BECKET.

Faithful friend !  
This may not be—the sun is setting, Grim.  
Seek out another leader ;—soon shall I

Be none to thee, or any man. Alas !  
What *have* I been to thee—to all who loved me ? <sup>(6)</sup>  
My life is like a garment, once of price,  
But patch'd with colours, whose complexion shocks  
The sense of harmony. Heaven's minister—  
Rejected of the earth. Primate of England—  
An exile from its dwellings. Clothed with power,  
As Legate of the Vatican, to hurl  
Its fires before the hopeless sinner's feet,  
And open there an isolating gulf  
His kindred dare not pass, while God's own face  
Is muffled to his desperate vision !—I,  
Gifted like this, when my aid stands in service  
Of some weak sitter on a throne of earth,  
Am fed and fairly spoken, as an arm  
To work some state machinery. This done,  
I too am done with, and the prince who rules  
O'er mortal bodies, when his end is earn'd,  
Can spurn at him who sequesters a soul !  
Yet this is my deserving. I have trod  
The fold of Christ, with foot that rather sought  
To mount o'er men, than to draw near to God.  
When, on the battle-ground of Crown and Church,  
Some little inch was fought for, I opposed

The proud reluctance of an earthly will,  
And phrased it, "zeal for Heav'n!"—and I am  
punish'd.

'Tis well—yet not much longer ; I can see  
One who will end all struggles, and remove  
This burden from my spirit.

GRIM.

Who is that ?

BECKET.

Death !

GRIM.

Death, my gracious Lord ! Why fear'st thou this ?

BECKET (*starting*).

What saidst thou ? *Fear !* Insulting priest !—nay,  
nay,

I err—thou didst not mean it. [*Speaking in a low tone.*

Friend, behold

Yon gloomy sea, whose wild waves seem at war  
With the black sky. (*They cannot hurt each other—  
That is the privilege of reasoning man.*)

It hath a sour look ; yet what, think'st thou, care  
The hearts that sleep beneath it, in the calm  
Of its deep chambers ? So, the sounding shocks

Of the world's conflict reach not to the grave.  
How often memory's stern recording pen  
Blots from life's page the poetry of hope !  
My mother dreamt—(my mother came from Moab—  
My sire of Israel <sup>(7)</sup>—'twas a double line.  
I noted it—'twas folly—but 'tis past)—  
She dreamt one morning that she saw my nurse  
Try with full hands to spread the coverlet  
Above my infant limbs ; it was too large  
To unfold it in the room ; she took it out  
Into the pleasance : still it stretch'd and stretch'd,  
Beyond the boundaries ; and fold grew on fold,  
Till the great cloth might wrap a kingdom. I  
Had faith in dreams—the dreams have fled, and soon  
'Twill be an easy task for weakest hands  
To spread another covering than that  
O'er all that's left of Becket.

[*Muses, and then with animation.*

Ha ! not so.

I'll have a greater burial in the minds  
Of coming Europe. From far land to land,  
From top to top of each cathedral tow'r,  
I'll hang my name and fame up, as a curtain  
To hide the sun from kings !—Whom have we here ?

*Enter Dean of Boulogne.*

'Tis *not* the pilot ! would it were—oh ! would  
Thy voice cried “ Fair for England ! ”

DEAN.

'Tis not fair ;  
Not now, nor ever will be, so I fear,  
While the Second Henry reigns. My reverend Lord,  
I am no pilot ; or at least am one  
To steer thee *from* that shore : 'tis rough with danger.

BECKET.

There is no peril where there's love ; the coast  
Will spread its arms to its returning child.

DEAN.

Not so its other children. It is lined  
With men who watch for thee, but not from love.  
Hatred hath shaped its plans, which only wait  
Thy coming, to be handled.

BECKET.

'Tis in vain.

Seven years the flock awaits its shepherd ; none  
Shall stay me now. Have I not bent enough ?  
Fools ! did they think I could not rise ? Will Heav'n,  
That holds its servant's garments from the hand

Of rotting Time, that keeps his sandals fresh  
Beneath the tread of exile, let his spirit  
Be wasted by oppression ?

DEAN.

Holy Sir !

I am the Priest of the poor Church of Boulogne.  
My lord the Count hath sent me to restrain  
This perilous voyage, that the needy earth  
Lose not so great a saint.

BECKET.

'Twill have a greater,  
If what thou fear'st be ratified.

GRIM.

My Lord !

If not for thine, yet for the sake—

BECKET.

Enough !

Time dies in talking. Think ye not I know  
All ye would urge ?—the excellent good reasons  
For wise delay—a cause in danger calling  
For caution to— Great Heav'n ! I'm sick of caution ;  
I'm sick to death. Nought stays me but the arm  
Of Him who strove with Israel. Hear me, sirs :  
*Who* am I ? England's Primate ? *Where* am I ?

*Whose* is my livery, that a tinsel Prince,  
Whom the hour raises or casts down, shall say  
“ Thus, and no further shalt thou go ”—to *me*,  
Whose breath can blight the hearts and hopes of all,  
Who sleep hard-couch'd in some uneasy nook,  
Or curtain'd round with crimson ! Shall it be  
That coming men shall read th' historic sneer,  
How Becket shook when Henry threaten'd him !  
'Twould stir the dry bones in my grave ! Good Father,  
Thanks to thy master. *We* are bound for England.  
I have had letters from our Lord the Pope.  
There's lightning in them ; shall *I* fear, or *he*,  
When those chain'd curses, fork'd with fire, are loos'd.  
And hurl'd at the prelatial head of York ?  
Come, sirs, away ! We wait no weather now.  
No wind blows contrary to a great resolve.  
Where's John of Salisbury ?

SCENE V.—*Normandy. Banquet-room of Palace.*

*Henry II., Lords, Reginald Fitzurse, Richard Brito  
and Hugh de Moreville.*

HENRY.

Brave knights, we've sung and feasted—I do hope  
That my most loyal subjects there in England  
Are merry as ourselves. How went that catch  
You troll'd, my Lord?

FIRST LORD.

“I am the wine-cup; I, at least,  
Am royal and holy, as prince and priest,  
For, to kiss *my* lips, alike bend down  
The head that's shaven, or wears a crown!”

HENRY.

True, that the prince and priest *have* drunk together  
At the same board. I fear me now a cup  
That could embosom the broad seas that part  
These shores from England, were not large enough  
For one ambitious draught. Brave sirs again!  
We have been merry. Heav'n demands the thanks  
We'll pay by gladdening others. Where's the woman  
Who came to us for justice? Call her here.



BRITO.

What ! now, Sire ?

HENRY.

Wherefore not ?

BRITO.

I merely thought—

The place—the time—

HENRY.

And what are they to me ?

I have an ear at all times for my subjects,

And I suppose can use it in this place

As well as any other. Call her in.

[*Exit Lord.*]*Enter William of Pavia.*

WILLIAM.

May't please your Highness ! as I enter'd here

There stood a man without, who earnestly

Craves audience for his daughter and himself.

HENRY.

Doth not the daughter crave it too ? Admit them.

*Enter Agnes and Father.*

Your names ? What want ye ?

FATHER.

May it please your Grace,

The cause that first gave birth unto my wants  
Should veil my name. I fear disgrace hath stol'n  
The honour of my house ; and, 'stead of show'ring  
Blessings of Heav'n from his commission'd palm,  
That a priest's hand hath filch'd it.

HENRY.

Not quite clear.

Speak out, man !

FATHER.

Sire ! my daughter Agnes here  
Hath been betroth'd to one of thy own suite—  
William de Tracy ; and she now refuses,  
Nor deigns a reason why, to consummate  
Her faith in wedlock.

HENRY.

Lady ! is this so ?

AGNES.

It is, my Lord.

HENRY.

And thou hast ceased to love  
William de Tracy ?

AGNES.

Not so, please your Grace.  
Love's in my heart, but conscience checks the feeling

From blossoming to fruit.—What can I say ?

HENRY.

Act ! Wilt thou marry ? Silence gives denial !  
Wilt not thou favour me, thy lord and king,  
Whose eye, in scanning the broad general weal,  
Must pry in private corners, with one reason,  
A few short whisper'd words, of what it is  
Hath led thy conscience to mislead thy love ?

AGNES.

Great Monarch ! bid me die, to guarantee  
The smallest hair upon thy royal brow  
From the assault of the rebellious wind,  
And willingly I'd place my head in pawn ;  
But, for my own poor life, oh ! urge me not  
To pay the price of a ne'er-dying shame !

HENRY.

'Tis from concealment that suspicion draws  
Its largest funds of shame. Then speak ! this silence  
Says that an enemy hath garrison'd  
The heart, by right De Tracy's.

AGNES.

Not the heart !

HENRY.

Well ! all at least that makes a heart worth having.

FATHER.

My Lord ! I will not spare what force can do —

HENRY.

Nay, friend, thou'rt wrong. Thou knowest not thy  
child

So well as I do. 'Tis thy creed, mayhap,  
That the resolvèd spirit is but found  
In a man's breast, and girded round with mail.  
Thou'rt wrong ! Behind the azure of those eyes  
There lies the colour of another temper,  
That would permit the rudest tool to break  
The blue-vein'd marble of her dainty limbs,  
But not a fragment there would find a tongue !  
No, no ; her lip's confession must be drawn  
By other charming. [*He takes the Father apart.*]

Thou dost know the Priest,  
His name, that is, whose hidden pow'r hath work'd  
This graceless miracle ? That name's not—Becket ?

FATHER.

I know him ; 'tis not Becket : yet the Primate  
Hath dragg'd the culprit (so we understand,  
By letters sent from France) to punishment  
Within the pale of his authority

From reach of Civil Law—as is his wont—  
And much I fear—

HENRY.

Of course; enough of this!

As is his wont! By Heav'n, we'll drag him forth!  
Authority! *That* pale is high indeed,  
In English land, the hand of England's King  
Can't overreach. What? 'Tis enough, I say;  
I'll hear no more. Admit the other woman.

*[Exeunt Agnes and Father; and after them  
William of Pavia.*

*Enter Matilda.*

Thy name?

MATILDA.

Matilda Rohan.

HENRY.

'Tis a good one.

*(Aside.)* She's had good looks, nor lost them yet. I fancy  
She's justice on her side. *(Aloud.)* Lady, thy wish?

MATILDA.

Unto whom speak I?

HENRY.

Know'st thou not a King,  
When thou dost see him?

MATILDA.

No ! I know but one,  
See but one face—'tis therefore I have sought  
Unto my lord the King, that by his pow'r  
He'll chase it from me.

HENRY.

What is that ?

MATILDA.

The face

That will not let me rest when I am weary,  
That will not let me pray as I was wont,  
But when I think for good, it comes in front,  
And with the pow'r of its deep eyes—O ! say,  
My Lord, what think'st thou is the fairest colour  
For a man's eyes ? And then, I would not care  
If they shone kindly, or in anger even ;  
The life in them might light a life in me !  
But they've a dark still look ; and on the lips  
There is a constant curl—that—O ! my Lord,  
'Tis hard to bear ! Do hearts grow really cold,  
Or is't a minstrel's phrase ? They say that thine  
Was ever kind to woman. Grant me right.

HENRY.

Would that I could !

MATILDA.

And art thou not a king?

Why should I be tormented? That cold face!

I gather'd up the sunbeams one hot day,

And cast them at it; but it grew not warm.

And once I ran to where the rainbow rested

Upon the earth, and fill'd my hand with colour,

And spread it o'er that haughty countenance;

But the hues gather'd to its lips, and made

Their sneer more terrible.

HENRY.

Poor thing! thy mind

Is touch'd—

MATILDA.

But touch'd, my lord the King! but touch'd.

Would it were crush'd; destruction would be peace.

Oh! I have sat and sat, and tried if thought

Could kill out reason—but it would not die,

Dragging its sore life like a bruised worm.

I am half mad in some things, so they say,

But not in this; for when I lift my eyes,

I see—but no, I will not do it now!

HENRY.

Who hath done this? Whose is that face thou talk'st of?

MATILDA.

I'll whisper thee his name ; and thou shalt see  
What I do—thou canst see it too. Alas !  
There was another—had I heard *but* him !  
He snatch'd me from the peril ; set my feet  
In a safe place ; and with mild words of pow'r,  
So warn'd and warm'd my spirit, that it felt  
Half holy as his own. Alas ! he went,  
And then it froze to earth.

HENRY.

*His name, good Lady?*

MATILDA.

His name was—yet men say that thou, my Lord,  
Dost love him not—his name was—pardon me,  
Thomas à Becket !

HENRY.

Thomas Becket !

*[Walks aside, then returns.*

*Lady!*

*He* is a priest ; thy lover was not one.

MATILDA.

He is not.

HENRY.

Nay—I knew it : else that monk



Had sided with his order. (*Speaking low.*) Virtue takes  
Its colour from the men who practise it,  
And fair repute makes fair opinion. Strange !  
Bad actions done by good men do partake  
More of their goodness, than the men are soil'd  
By their own evil deeds. The light that's cast  
On an immaculate cathedral shines  
All whitely pure, while the same beam's a shadow  
Reflected from a throne ! (*Aloud.*) Yet in this instance  
He did right well ; and I could love him.

MATILDA.

Love him,

My Lord ! Oh, love him !—who is worthier  
To fill a monarch's heart ?

HENRY.

His head would fill  
A monarch's crown, if so it chanced that England  
Could bear two masters. I, indeed, would hold  
Him equal to myself, whom in days past  
More than that self I prized. Oh ! Becket, Becket !  
Couldst thou but *let* me love thee ! That proud  
temper  
Won't turn aside to see where stands a king  
Sueing to be a friend !

*[Enter hastily Archbishop of York, followed by  
William of Pavia.*

What do'st *thou* here,  
My lord of York?

YORK.

Nor York, nor England's self  
Can coexist with Canterbury. Sire !  
He rides the land as if it were a palfrey  
To carry him to Rome. From place to place  
Shouts of arm'd men proclaim his pride, and threaten  
With their strain'd voice destruction on each head  
That's higher than his own !

HENRY.

Whom meanest thou ?

YORK.

Thomas à Becket !

HENRY.

By the eyes of God !

That man again !

YORK.

Again and ever, Sire ;  
When will that breath be bated, which hath dared  
To excommunicate myself for crowning  
Thy son, the King ?

HENRY.

I'll hear no more.

YORK.

My Lord ;

There is no pleasure now but Becket's will—

There is no Church in England now but Becket ;

There is no King—

HENRY.

Peace, I tell thee, peace !

Dost think to choke me with that name ? By heav'n !

It were not sacrilege to tear thy tongue out,

Croaking that cursèd strain !—still only Becket—

Becket ! Where's Henry ?—those base knights ! I've  
fed them

Till their fat gratitude can't rise from table

To rid their monarch of a beggar-monk

His bounty set on horseback !

*[He walks about and returns, during which, exeunt  
Moreville, Fitzurse, and Brito.]*

That coward rabble !

I slaved to make them free. I might have clench'd

Their collars tighter. Had I done it, then—

Are ye too traitors ? Speak !

YORK.

My Lord !

HENRY.

Thou liest !

I am not thine, nor any man's !

[ *Walks about angrily ; returns, and sees Matilda.*

Poor thing !

I'm madder than thyself. Thou too dost know  
What 'tis to trust. There—let me look on thee ;  
So—so ; I'm calmer.

Now, my good lord of York, here is a man  
Who kicks at laws and lawgivers ; who curses  
Kings when they block his path, and strives to nail  
The ears of England to the doors of Rome:  
How can this breeder of a pestilence  
Retain the fatal pow'r and place bestow'd  
In a repented moment ?

YORK.

Good my Lord !

The holy oil, though pour'd on graceless limbs,  
Still smells of its original Heav'n. Behold !  
An earnest here of the divinity  
That dwells in us, and in our faith, and claims  
For all who share that sanctifying service,

Though faithless found, what worldly men would call  
Unreasoning reverence. To lose this would be  
A waste of Deity.'

HENRY.

Be it so—give *me*  
Something that is less holy—I will have it !  
Said not that Papal agent to myself <sup>(8)</sup>  
That he'd absolve the names which I submitted,  
From Becket's censure ? Said he not besides,  
These foreign thunders should be hurl'd no more  
At English head, without my royal knowledge ?

YORK.

He did, Sire.

HENRY.

And this more than regal Rome  
Spreads its divine original, thou wouldst say,  
Over its earthly deeds—they need a covering !  
Yet 'tis a strange ambition that pretends  
The indefeasible sanctity of a lie !  
Ha ! by—but come ; we will consult on this  
Ere my wrath rises. (*Looking around.*) But, I see  
    them not !  
Fitzurse, and Moreville ?

FIRST LORD.

Sire! they've left, and ta'en  
Richard de Brito with them.

MATILDA (*starting forward*).

Who? *he* here!

And gone—to England! take me there! My brain  
Is painted with the future. Oh! my heart!

[*Throwing up her arms.*

Archbishop! it will reach thee! Lord Archbishop,  
Beware the knife! [*She faints.*

HENRY.

What meaneth this?

FIRST LORD.

Your Grace!

She is insensible.

HENRY.

Away; and summon

De Castro to her aid. Then seek those knights,  
And tell them, when I wish them quit my presence  
That I myself can speak. The world shall find,  
Henry Plantagenet is yet a king.

SCENE VI.—*Room, in Normandy.*

*Agnes, William of Pavia.*

WILLIAM.

Lady, I sent to see thee. Much I fear  
That mischief is determin'd on the head  
Of England's welfare. Such indeed he stands  
Before the eyes of all who look beyond  
The vale of life, to the high mountain-tops  
That sun themselves in Heaven ; of such art thou !

AGNES.

*My* eyes, my Lord, are oftener weigh'd down  
To the cold earth, by a dispiriting sense  
Of my own sins.

WILLIAM.

They are forgiven thee !  
Look up in peace, my child. Thou know'st à Becket,  
That lamp of the true faith ?

AGNES.

All know à Becket.

The mind is dark indeed, on which hath stream'd  
No ray from that intelligence.

\* WILLIAM.

No doubt.

'Twere pity such a form (you know his person ?)  
—Setting aside the Church's greater loss  
In such a loss as him—should be defaced  
By the rude carving of the assassin's knife !  
How well the frame of such a presence shrines  
His many-tinted mind ! 'Twould grieve thee, doubtless,  
Were such a noble piece of nature marr'd.  
And thou wouldst save it ?

AGNES.

Certainly, my Lord ;

I'd save the man from harm, as I would save  
A fellow-being ; but I'd strain my life  
To keep *such* night from our religious land,  
As would fall down upon all eyes and hearts  
When sets the sun of Becket !

WILLIAM (*aside*).

Is it so ?

A broad-cast feeling, not allied to love ?  
(*Aloud.*) Thou'rt right, my daughter. 'Tis a fitting  
temper

To work with, unto good. I said the Primate  
Stands in much danger from some certain knights



Who quitted, with an ill-betokening haste  
King Henry's side. Thy lover is not of them.  
We'll keep him here. Now I would know of thee  
The shape and bent of his peculiar mind.  
Firm ? jealous ? resolute ? giv'n to revenge ?  
Of course he's valiant : 'tis a common virtue,  
At least in knighthood.

AGNES.

Thou dost mean De Tracy ?  
He's brave as Henry : fitly primed to catch  
Each spark of insult, 'till the man grows fire.

WILLIAM.

And with a steadfast and strong head to knit  
The plannings of a purpose ?

AGNES.

Yes, my Lord.

But wherefore ask me ?

WILLIAM.

We must know the risk  
To find the obvious guard. A man like him  
Must be held back from this conspiracy  
By such restraints as chafe his soul the least.  
—I do not wonder that thy face, my child,

Could draw a Priest's devotion from the skies,  
And fix it there !

AGNES.

My Lord !

WILLIAM.

'Twas natural—

Though not to be forgiven ! yet had I  
Been ever led from the straight line of right  
By light from woman's eyes, 'twere such as looks  
From thine, my daughter !

AGNES.

If I've sinn'd, it rests  
Between my God, and—

WILLIAM.

Him who hath confess'd thee !  
I told thee thou'rt forgiven. Dost thou think  
There is a weight so heavy, which the hands  
Of them who wield God's mercy or His wrath  
Can't lift from off thy conscience ? Now, suppose  
That *I* should bend upon that blooming face  
A look of earthly love, and haply read  
An answer there *not* heralded by frowns ;  
Deem'st thou, fair casuist, that the man who stands  
At the right hand of Peter's delegate,

Could find no spiritual chemistry  
To blanch the reddest stain ?

AGNES.

Lord Cardinal !

What doth this quick ungracious language mean  
From sacred lips ? I would not think that thou  
Art angling with thy pious art in hopes  
That my light taste may rise up to the surface  
At the first bait which Pleasure throws for it !  
Such I am not !

WILLIAM.

No, lady ! (Nor is this  
The time for such things.) I but cast these hints  
Before the mirror of thy soul to see  
How they would look reflected thence. I feel  
Thou canst be trusted. Virtue never fails  
To hold regard, though beauty loses love  
Ere 'tis well caught. Remain here for awhile.  
I'll pen a line which thou shalt take to England.  
'Twill serve the Church—would it were ever served  
By such a messenger ! [Exit.

AGNES.

Stay here awhile !

For what ? I doubt that holy Cardinal.

I'll seek my father—yet my father's arms  
Yield no kind refuge. Serve the Church indeed !  
If I had served it less—O woman ! woman !  
Poor thing of wasting contrast ; weak as water,  
Or nerved with iron ; pure as angel, black  
As very fiend ; toy, mistress, tool, and queen,  
Deceiver and deceived. There are none by :  
I will display my sin's complexion here  
To my own soul, and the absolving spirit  
That fills the living air ! Misled, I listen'd  
To words that—hark ! there is an armed tread—  
I must away.

*Enter William de Tracy.*

Thou here ! What brings De Tracy—

TRACY.

Unto a place where Agnes is ! But what  
Brings Agnes, where she scarce could hope to meet  
De Tracy at this holy Cardinal's ?

AGNES.

If he be holy, I at least am not,  
And therefore should we meet. I seek the Church  
From love of it, and hatred of myself.

TRACY.

The love I've heard of. Agnes ! would my ears  
Were diseneumber'd of that heavy tale  
By thy denying tongue ! Oh, Agnes, listen,  
If yet thou lov'st me ! Thou didst find me first  
A man of war, and such as warriors are,  
Heart-harden'd to without, like shirt of steel  
That answers not when foemen knock for entry.  
What made me feel ? Thy love ! That cleft my breast  
In gaping fissures, that the dews of heaven  
Might make their dwelling in that barren ground !  
Think, Agnes, that the wounds of such a spirit  
Have rugged lips for closing—Dost thou love me ?

AGNES.

William ! I do.

TRACY.

Then tell me in one word,  
That it is false, the tale thy father brings,  
And in one action give me heart and hand !

AGNES.

Oh ! William, not to thee ! Oh, never, never !  
I will not wrong thee with a gift the which  
Thou, the proud Baron, might—might—

TRACY

This is torture !

Tell me, what *hast* thou done. I have a right,  
*My Agnes !*

AGNES.

Oh ! alas, not that !—Stay—stay, De Tracy,  
My temper's quick as thine. Think not I'm happy.  
Ah ! I have sat, and woke ; and thought of thee  
With smiles and tears ; the smiles—how faint and few !  
Were for the past ; and the deep drowning tears,  
For the long bitter future. 'Tis enough,  
If punishment can cleanse a sinful mind,  
To have foregone all sense of joy, which guilt  
Could hope, or virtue gain. Oh ! spare me more.

TRACY.

Agnes ! I'll have it.

AGNES.

What ?

TRACY.

The name of him  
Who hath wrong'd me, and rased thy happiness.

AGNES.

I breathe no name—I never talk'd of wrong.

TRACY.

But I do ! I *will* have it. Wherefore hide  
This secret in thy breast, and baulk revenge ?

AGNES.

Revenge, De Tracy !

TRACY.

What thou wilt ! Revenge,  
Or justice—'tis no matter. Speak !—

AGNES.

De Tracy !

There is a hidden pow'r that even holds  
The tongue of woman : there are sealèd thoughts  
That open but to Heav'n. Thou dost believe  
In God, and in his visible ministry ?

TRACY.

Too often visible ; too often seen  
In such a motley clothing, as would shame  
The merest soldier who e'er swore by day  
Or pass'd his nights in—

AGNES.

Tracy ! Thou'rt a man

TRACY.

Ay ! and a fierce one, that would batter down

The topmost crown from brow of Pope who dared  
To foul the thing he loved.

AGNES.

Thou'rt hasty !

TRACY.

Woman !

Not hastier than thyself. *Thy* breathless love  
Must have a taste of the unwholesome fruit  
Ere the Law ripen'd it. Why didst thou cast  
Thy pearl before that sacred swine ?—and now  
Thou wouldst conceal, defeat—May the fiend plague  
thee !

Return unto thy mire !—

AGNES.

Sir !—But I leave thee

I did not think to hear a soldier's tongue  
Make war upon a lady !

TRACY.

Lady !

AGNES.

Yes !

I am so. Doubtless, we must tell such things  
To those whose nature hath no kindred sense  
Which might make feeling knowledge. Sir ! a woman



Claims ever gentle treatment from the sex  
Who hold all pow'r, but use it scurvily  
When they would tread on one whom her own shame  
Casts down—great God ! how low—Farewell.     [*Exit.*]

TRACY.

Go ! go !

O gods and devils ! would I had a man  
To cleave in twain.                     [*Stamps about the room.*]

*Enter William of Pavia.*

WILLIAM.

Here, lady !—What ? De Tracy !  
Alone ! And where is she for whom I writ  
This missive unto England ?

TRACY.

Would she were  
Where some kind fiend would pluck her foul-hued  
heart  
From her fair body.

WILLIAM.

What is this, Sir Knight ?  
Thou dost not know her !

TRACY.

Know her ? I ? No—no—  
'Twere shame to know her.

WILLIAM.

Thou art vex'd, De Tracy.

Something hath ruffled thee.

TRACY.

Me? Not the least!

I'm cool as—may perdition seize—quite cool—

Why should I not be cool?

WILLIAM.

I cannot say.

Yet would I that the lady had not fled

Ere she had ta'en my letter to the Primate;

For in *her* keeping, as she kindly said,

It would not miss the mark.

TRACY.

What Primate? wherefore?

WILLIAM.

What Primate? Oh! à Becket. Some three knights

Have left the king, who, much we fear, are bent

To do his Lordship hurt.

TRACY.

They have! And she?

WILLIAM.

Of course would save him, for she loves the Archbishop.

TRACY.

Loves him ?

WILLIAM.

Of course, again. Who doth not love  
That holy man ? With what a presence too  
For woman's eye ! She only shares in this  
The general heart of all, that like a garment  
In warm affection girds his person round.

TRACY.

Would that all Hell would gird it round with flames !

WILLIAM.

Sir Knight !

TRACY.

Sir Devil ! Well—I have it now—  
No time to lose.

WILLIAM.

Yet wait awhile !

TRACY.

I cannot.

WILLIAM.

But one short word of why I sent for thee.

TRACY.

Then quick, my Lord.

SCENE VII.—*Near Canterbury Cathedral.*

*Crowd, Ranulf de Broc,<sup>(9)</sup> Richard de Brito, Richard  
Blois with the Crowd.*

BRITO.

What do these here? Who are they?

DE BROC.

Patients, waiting

Their medicine patiently.

BRITO.

And who the leech?

DE BROC.

Thomas, the Primate of all England, Legate  
Of Peter's cousin; him, who doubtless fisheth  
In *his* way, sitting on a hill to throw  
His net with fuller fling.

BRITO.

What meanest thou?

That his high-priest (he'll soon be lower) deals  
In drugs and simples?

DE BROC.

Not quite so—at least  
Not of the common sort; the charms he uses  
Are the least anythings of vilest stuff,

Which, when himself hath bless'd or handled, turn  
To veritable somethings, fondly hugg'd  
To the warm breast of faith.

BRITO.

And he permits

This holy traffic ?

DE BROC.

Well—how far I know not.

But Power's an epicure that will not question  
The many little items that compound  
The flavour which it loves. Behold ! where comes  
The Archbishop's servant. Draw near—we may catch  
Some stray intelligence.

[*Enter Tungstan.*

CROWD.

Here's Tungstan—Tungstan !  
Welcome—and blessings on thy master !

TUNGSTAN.

Thanks,  
Good countrymen ; and now for business. Which—  
Where is the man, John Sigwulf, who has had  
An ulcer in his leg these twenty years ?

JOHN.

Here, Master, here.

TUNGSTAN.

There, friend, 's a bit of rag  
That hath been wrapp'd about the sacred leg  
Of the Archbishop's self ; lay this upon  
Thy ulcer. Thou hast had it thirty years,  
I think thou saidst ? 'Twill heal it if there's virtue—

R. BLOIS.

In an Archbishop's vermin ! They, at least,  
Turn'd out of hair and sackcloth, will but change  
Their quarters for the better.

TUNGSTAN.

What, Sir, saidst thou ?

R. BLOIS.

Oh ! nothing—nothing. Merely, that I wonder  
How such a holy man as the Lord Primate  
Hath any need of legs.

TUNGSTAN.

Next, I've a charm  
For evil spirits ; 'tis a phial fill'd  
With water, which the Primate—

R. BLOIS.

Gracious Heav'n !  
Hast thou then made these lights of Israel  
Like other men ?

TUNGSTAN.

Bless'd—which the Primate bless'd ;

Why interrupt me ?

R. BLOIS.

I mistook your meaning.

Pardon, good master Tungstan.

CROWD.

Heed him not.

He is a graceless scoffer, known as such

To all the country.

TUNGSTAN.

Where is Thomas ?—he

Who sees the spirits ?

THOMAS.

Here, Sir !

TUNGSTAN.

Now, friend Thomas,

What was the last like ?

THOMAS.

'Twas a moony night ;

I woke, and heard a hissing in my room,

And at my bed-foot stood what seem'd a most

Enormous goose, and on its head a large

Green—

R. BLOIS.

Night-cap with a tassel !

THOMAS.

No, Sir, 'twas

A plume of feathers.

R. BLOIS.

Oh ! Now, hadn't you

A mirror <sup>(10)</sup> on the wall just opposite ?

THOMAS.

I had ; and have it.

R. BLOIS.

Ah ! I see ; but then

*You* don't wear plumes of feathers. Probably  
The goose was green, and not the feathers, Thomas !  
And, doubtless, very large.

TUNGSTAN.

Some drops of this,  
Sprinkled about the room, will scare each devil  
Who ventures there from Hell.

OLD MAN.

I'm very old, Sir ;

I cannot tell you why, but so it is,

My sight and hearing are not half so good



As forty years ago. If you've a cure  
For this, I'd thank you.

TUNGSTAN.

Well ; I quite forgot—

I scarcely know if the Archbishop's pow'r  
Can reach so far.

R. BLOIS.

No harm in trying it.

And if it fails—why, then I'll tell you ;—boil him  
In woman's milk ! I warrant you his flesh  
Will turn as soft as any sucking child's.  
We've many poor men here, Sir ; could you not  
Give each a shred of the Archbishop's purse  
When he was Chancellor ?

TUNGSTAN.

Your jokes are rude, friend !

My master's purse was open unto all  
Who had a want or wish.

R. BLOIS.

'Tis true ; and greater

Was the meek Churchman's merit, who, discharging  
His private feeling when he serv'd the public,  
Practised that painful generosity  
Which spends from a friend's pocket<sup>(11)</sup>—better far

Than these cheap scraps and rags of sanctity !

TUNGSTAN.

Friends ! Are you pleas'd to hear these insults daub'd  
On our religion ?

CROWD.

We'll not suffer it.

Off with him !

TUNGSTAN.

Patience for awhile, my friends !

Here is some earth on which the Primate's foot  
Hath left its holy print ; it will enrich  
The barrenest soil—and where is Gerald Ulph,  
Whose wife hath never bless'd him with a child ?—  
Here, friend's, a text of Scripture : 'tis an order  
To multiply, and so forth : and 'tis written  
By Becket's self. Bind it about her waist  
For a full month, and then—

R. BLOIS.

What, Sir ! a month ?

It seems a most unnecessary time.

Why, there's good Father John ; I'll bet a mark  
Against a rosary—

TUNGSTAN.

What dirt is this

To throw upon God's servants ? Who is pure  
As the Archbishop ? If thou know'st another  
Like Becket, point him out ! *Who* leaves by night  
The warm indenture of his curtain'd bed  
To lie o' the wintry floor ? *Who* prays and fasts  
That angels weep to be outdone in Heaven ?  
*Who* thinks that water is too rich a draught  
For holy palates, and with bitter taste  
And noisome smell of daily herbs, compounds  
His golden goblet ? *Who's* the friend of England ?  
*Who* 'neath the roof of the poor cottager  
Bends low the sacred head that strikes against  
The lintel of a palace ?

CROWD.

Becket ! Becket !

FIRST MAN.

He rules the Church ; and 'tis the Church that rules  
The Lord who rules the vassal !

SECOND MAN.

Saw ye not  
How his horse stumbled when he enter'd here ?  
It was a Norman beast, that. Who rides better  
Than the Archbishop ?

R. BLOIS.

Or, who're better ridden  
Than you yourselves? I know not if this Becket  
Be one of England's sons; but this I know,  
That he's the son of woman: see ye not  
When private ends grasp public instruments?  
What matters it to you, if ye be serfs  
To a mail'd baron, or a man who wears  
A shirt of hair? The latter chain perhaps  
Is somewhat worse, in that the wily forger  
Takes care to numb the restive mind, which else  
Might strive to cast it off! This Becket—

CROWD.

Stop!

We'll make thee change thy note!

SECOND MAN.

We'll teach his tongue  
To rail against the Primate!

DE BROC.

Richard Brito!

Let's save this fellow from these brainless bears—  
They'll hug him tight else. Maybe he'll assist us.

*[Throwing off his cloak.]*

Off with you, ye base curs of Saxon breed!

BRITO.

Save your vile lives, if they be worth it—off!

[*They drive away the crowd.*]

DE BROU.

Now, friend, for you. You know these latitudes?—  
The quarters of the Archbishop, and the rest  
Which join to the Cathedral?

R. BLOIS.

Yes, I do.

DE BROU.

Then come with us. We must seek out Fitzurse.  
Where's Tracy? He and Moreville should have reach'd  
Saltwood ere this.

SCENE VIII.—*Normandy, Palace.*

*Henry II., William of Pavia, Otho.*

HENRY.

Two-pence in every pound, for one whole year,<sup>(12)</sup>  
Granted by England that her pious arms  
Be order'd well to rout the Infidel!  
'Tis a small proof of the great love we bear  
Our mother church.

WILLIAM.

No proof is needed, Sire.

'Tis known the King of England yields to none  
In reverent love for Rome ; and will submit  
His wishes unto hers.

HENRY.

Ay ! Is it so ?

What *wants* the holy father ?

OTHLO.

Nothing more  
Than an unforced prolongment of the faith  
For which he's still your debtor.

WILLIAM.

That apostate,  
The unsaintly Prince of Germany, hath ceased  
To cloud the thoughts of Rome, which can be giv'n  
More freely to fair England ; and the weal  
Of her obedient sons.

HENRY.

Your Eminence  
Means, I presume, his grateful Holiness  
Has shaken off the long-encumbering weight  
Of Frederick Barbarossa ; and, no more  
Having the dangerous pretence of Victor<sup>(13)</sup>

Before his sacred eyes, can now dispense  
With Henry, King of England !

OTHO.

Not so, Sire !

Whenever did the memory of Rome  
Omit to write on her enduring page  
The name of every friend—

HENRY.

And every foe !  
She recollects them, likewise ; and the friends  
Are press'd the closer to her prudent breast  
When her foes bluster near !

WILLIAM.

An' please your Grace  
To call to mind with what maternal care  
The eyes of Rome o'erlook the broad domains  
Of Catholic England,<sup>(1)</sup> guarding while it sleeps  
The spirits of all flesh that harbours there !  
Nor there alone—within the stormy bounds  
Of that famed isle—but where these distant shores  
Obey thy ample sceptre. Brittany,  
Anjou, Tourraine, and others, nearly half  
As large a realm as that which owns the sway  
Of saintly Louis, craves the watchful love

Of Rome, and has it !

HENRY.

Right, your Eminence !

'Tis well to mind me that the fretful sea,  
Which will not always hear my call, divides  
My French inheritance from England ! This  
May rein my wrath in when it rides ahead !  
Not much unlike, as if myself should plant  
Upon the quiet ground where Victor stood  
The threatening show of Pascal ! But enough—  
My business is that you uphold that rebel  
Against my sovereign power—that Lord Archbishop  
To lord it o'er his master. You absolved,  
In my own presence, and by word of mouth,  
The censures which he fulmin'd against York ;  
Yet, by the double dealing of the pen,  
Supplied an underhand authority  
To unsettle England, when it pleased the temper  
Of that belligerent priest.

WILLIAM.

Your Royal Highness

Is wise enough to see (who's wiser than  
Henry of England ?) that the absolution  
Pronounc'd by mouth, concern'd the past alone.



The letters granted by the Pope, contain'd  
The future in their scope ; and which the wisdom  
Of the Lord Primate might divulge or not,  
As England needed.

HENRY.

God's eyes ! Cardinal,  
Take my word for it, England shall be ruled  
By England's King—Who's here ?    [*Enter First Lord.*

FIRST LORD.

May 't please your Grace !  
The three good knights who left your royal presence  
With such unmannerly suddenness, men say,  
Have sail'd for England.

HENRY.

After ! drag them back !

I fear that Brito and Fitzurse.

FIRST LORD.

The lady,

Matilda Rohan raves incessantly,  
Craving quick passage there ; and weeps and cries.  
“ Beware, my Lord, the knife ! My Lord Archbishop !  
Beware the knife ! ”

HENRY.

Take her along with thee,

One of the three she knows. You have my order.  
Be quick, and do it.

[*Exit First Lord.*]

By the light of Heav'n,  
Hath Henry none but traitors round his person ?  
Shall these, my own hired knaves, these common kestrels,  
Swoop at a falcon ? 'Tis a royal quarry,  
To be struck fairly—ha ! Lord Cardinals !  
Rome, in her most considerate wisdom, thinks  
That she, the head, rules best when most misrule  
Pervades the members—'tis a gentle mother  
To draw obedience from the children's quarrels,  
Which her care lulls into a waking sleep !  
This is your master's doing !

WILLIAM.

*Ours ?* We've one ;  
Our Father, who 's in heaven !

HENRY.

And wondrously  
Ye honour the paternity !—'tis right !  
Truly, the Pope's a servant to the servants  
Of—Tush ! hath England no more gold, my Lords,  
That ye've no more devotion for its King ?  
Men, too, are mostly bribed to do what's wrong ;

Yet I must buy you to my ranks, to fight  
Against an upstart Priest, who would break down  
The step on which he mounted—who would stop.  
When he doth speak, the royal breath, which made  
The life which he misuses !

WILLIAM.

He withholds

His hand's consent to what his soul rejects.  
That is, when call'd by thee to ratify  
The laws of man, Heaven's zealous servant adds  
The words which save the honour of his God—

HENRY.

And of his *order* !

WILLIAM.

What herein doth Becket  
To be call'd sinner ?

HENRY.

Call him what ye like !

And add, when first he sign'd those articles  
With his full voice, which we advised drew out  
As the ancestral safeguards of the realm,  
That the arch-traitor sent his heart to Rome,  
To witness his lip's lie at Clarendon !

WILLIAM.

Those godless customs touch'd on holy ground,  
The Church's birth-land ; he who breathed consent  
To such a trespass, pass'd his pow'rs, and gave  
That which he could not give.

HENRY.

A subject owes  
Allegiance to—

WILLIAM.

His God before his King !

HENRY.

His God !

WILLIAM.

As speaking through the mortal lips  
Which He hath made his own !

HENRY.

The will of Heav'n,  
Strain'd through such throats as thine, Lord Cardinal,  
Would pipe to a strange tune ! I gave this man  
All that he has—

WILLIAM.

Your Highness gave him land ;  
And hard cathedral walls ; and worldly coin :  
But the great spirit and the soul that make

Infinity their field—the lofty faith,  
That stands on earth, yet lifts its head to Heav'n,  
And looks with shaded eyes into the secrets  
Of God's pavilion there—the priceless wealth  
Of blessing when and what he will (and, yea !  
It *shall* be bless'd, and what he curses cursed,  
Or serf, or Cæsar)—these thou gav'st not, Prince,  
And these thou canst not take !

HENRY.

Intriguing Priest !

Think not to reckon 'mid the slaves of Rome,  
Henry of England ! Oh ! would Heav'n but grant  
That I could cast into my people's eyes  
Light from my own, in *your* authority  
They 'd see a most foul monster, fed by fools  
To fatten knaves ! And yet the time *will* come,  
When English hands, led on by reasoning heads,  
Shall tear the veil from off the face of Rome,  
And show the harlot's grin ! And then, my lords,  
The native honesty of English hearts  
Will loathe it, as I now !

WILLIAM.

Yet present times,  
Empow'r his Holiness to interdict—

HENRY (*springing forward*).

God's eyes ! Lay England under interdict !  
Shall I, who can raise up and dash to earth  
A castle from its rocky roots—shall I—  
I—Henry—how I hate ye !—shall I suffer  
Pope, prince, or living thing, to touch the *name*  
Of my dominions with his villanous breath ?  
Shall sandal, or arm'd heel, when I say nay,  
Indent the dust of England ?—Come, we waste  
Our time with these men. Now, I hope in God  
I never more may see a Cardinal !

[*Exeunt Henry and attendants.*]

OTHO.

My Lord ! methinks you let your language run  
A dangerous length. His Holiness the Pope  
Hath need of Henry. The world's scales are held  
By Alexander, who, to trim the balance,  
Puts princes for the weights.

WILLIAM.

Beyond a doubt !  
But I know Henry—we'll not lose him yet.  
Nor should Rome ever bend, but when she stoops  
To pick up some advantage : a knit brow,

When there's no danger, will enhance the grace  
Of a few smiles, whene'er occasion needs.

[*Walks aside and returns.*]

Canst thou not see that Becket's hours are number'd?  
'Twill not be long ere we shall gain a martyr,  
And this hot king a thorn, to rake his flesh  
In such a festering sort, 'twill take to heal it  
A costly outlay of humility!

OTHIO.

Those knights that left the presence of the king,  
Were three in number—what in nature?

WILLIAM.

Bold,

Not resolute; fierce-hearted, but not firm.

OTHIO.

Then will their purpose break like scatter'd foam  
Upon the rock of action!

WILLIAM.

No! a fourth

Has follow'd them, I hear, who'll guide the wave—  
Break when it will, 'twill make a shipwreck first.

OTHIO.

Who's that?

WILLIAM.

I know not—some men say, De Tracy.

OTHO.

Yet this Archbishop is a shining light,  
A tow'r of strength, like that of Lebanon,  
Which looks towards Damascus! Such a life  
Will serve us—

WILLIAM (*speaking low*).

Less than such a death! à Becket  
Is but a man, a wayward child of passion  
And idle whims; with some rash notions too  
About his sacred office. Becket's self  
Is but half Rome's, while Becket's memory  
Is hers, in whole!

OTHO.

But then—a violent death!  
To see, and suffer such a thing to be,  
*Does* seem, I think, to war with—

WILLIAM.

Well?

OTHO.

The Scriptures!

WILLIAM.

The *what*, Lord Cardinal?



SCENE IX.—*Canterbury. The Archbishop's Quarters,  
adjoining the Cathedral.*

*Becket, John of Salisbury, Peter of Nismes.*

BECKET (*to Peter*).

Letters from William of Pavia, hast thou?

What says his Eminence?

PETER.

He doth rejoice  
That England, which so long a time lay dead  
In sin and trespass, hath regain'd the heart  
Of all its spiritual life, whose healthy blood  
Will chafe the shores of each minutest vein  
In unison with—

BECKET.

Rome ; which doubtless suffer'd  
The carcass of the land, these seven long years,  
To lie without its Head of Canterbury ;  
That when it rose, recall'd to second life,  
And by a second author, it might make  
The greater miracle ! What further, Sir,  
Is the good Cardinal pleased to say ?

PETER.

He dwells

Upon your Lordship's single excellence—  
A glorious pillar of the Catholic Church,  
Based upon Truth, and springing up through Time,  
To hide its head with God ! To Him he prays,  
That it may please His wisdom to protect  
So dear a life, within whose mortal folds  
Lies wrapp'd up a great cause !

BECKET.

He's very kind.

PETER.

Vex'd by such thoughts as these, he would suggest  
That 'twere but wise to smooth the ruffled King.  
And, touching those broad lands which he hath  
wrench'd  
From Mother Church, to feed the sinewy Barons  
Who prop his throne up—if the claim were waived—  
'Twould blunt the fore-set edge of danger.

BECKET

Well !

What doth he write beside ?

PETER.

His Eminence

Adds this advice, that, when the daring hand  
Of York's Archbishop, stretching to an act  
Which was thine own by ancient privilege, crown'd  
The younger King, it was a grievous wrong—  
But one to be forgiven, if thereby  
Your Lordship's foot might gain a surer hold  
On the revisited soil.

BECKET.

What further?

PETER.

Nothing,

But earnest wishes for your Lordship's good.

BECKET.

Then bear my answer to Lord William. Tell him  
That I must think the world most fortunate  
That, when Tiberius Cæsar reign'd on earth,  
There were no Cardinals to fill the seat  
Of Pontius Pilate; else had all mankind  
Mourn'd the lost good of the Redeeming Death.  
For, such the dangerous sense of justice lodged  
In the pure bosoms of that sacred conclave,  
They would have saved the sinless son of God,  
And crucified—Barabbas! Farewell, Sir.

*[Exit Peter.]*

I've done with *Cardinals* ! Oh ! John, I'm sick.  
The Church's son oft bears a losing heart  
When the head triumphs—triumphs over whom ?  
—O'er fellow-labourer in a fallow field,  
Where each defeat (as fancied worth is shown  
In worthless colours) leaves one hand the less  
To work for the Lord's harvest. But with *me*—  
Is it all right with me ? Sad mystery !  
Too oft Heav'n's soldier finds the sword of God,  
Transmitted down to him through earthly hands,  
Rusted by earthly error ; dew's of Time,  
Heat-drops of passion, or the soil of self,  
Defile its edge—and then *his* fallible arm  
Strikes blindly forth, and multiplies the wrong.  
Oh ! might I drink more pure, in purer realms,  
This Gospel wine, which, quaff'd by mortal lips  
From mortal vessels, hath a double taint  
From what the goblet and the mouth impart !  
How think'st thou, ancient friend ?

JOHN.

What means my Lord ?

BECKET.

To-morrow's sun must light thy steps to find  
Another Lord than Becket. His sure death

Is settled by his foes ; and Becket's friends  
Should, with consenting joy, behold the crown  
Thus placed upon his life.

JOHN.

My gracious master—

Die ! thou ?

BECKET.

I must.

JOHN.

But wouldst thou ?

BECKET.

John ! I would.

JOHN.

Yet live to serve the Church !

BECKET.

My death may serve it,  
And my own fame too, if the time fits well.  
Who knows what wretched froth may yet arise  
From out this fretful sea ? What I have knit  
May be unravell'd to the scornful wind,  
By the irresolute shaking of the hand  
In some weak moment.

JOHN.

With thy place, thy pow'r,

Thy matchless intellect, thy vigorous years,  
With these before and for thee, from the past  
Hope turns, and, pointing to the future, asks,  
“What *yet* hath Becket done?”

BECKET.

This—I have stood

Like a bare hill upon our coast, whose top  
Keeps up the light which dying suns shed there  
From hidden skies, the while its base repels  
The conspiracy of tumultuous waves.  
Barren indeed of what men call delight  
Hath been my path since first I grasp'd the reins  
Of this high guidance. I may fall for good—  
I may not move for it, when they who stretch  
For the same goal beside me, clog the course  
With all the mire of their base natural earth.  
The great cause falters : it demands a victim,  
Whose death may fill its life with fresher blood.  
'Twill be a seemly sacrifice for one  
Who hath maintain'd 'gainst foe, and fatal friend,  
Th' inheritance, which, pass'd through many hands,  
Hath rous'd the energies of many souls,  
The honour of his order !

JOHN.

And of God ?

BECKET.

I hope—but say I the man Becket knows not  
Th' ambition of his kind ?—No, no. The mind  
That wastes its thoughts in disentangling there  
The motives of each deed, must lose the pow'r  
Which throws itself into the world of action  
With concentrated will. And is the master  
Served e'er the worse who gives his servant wages  
The other spends on his own purposes ?  
Still with no feign'd humility I own  
My scantiness of duty—

JOHN.

Think of that !

What ? Can the vassal say “Thus far I go”  
Before his Lord, and with self-satisfied mind  
Close up th' account ?

BECKET.

Death terminates the bond,  
I do not tear it with my own hand.

JOHN.

Nay !

But thou *canst* shun the fate that threatens.

BECKET.

Never !

By the great Heav'n I've toil'd for.

JOHN.

Much thou hast  
Toil'd for a Church that lends an eager hand  
To drag thee up the steps of pow'r ; but looks  
With chilling aspect on the Christian struggle,  
When the soul wrestles with itself, and strives  
By faith and truth to keep the spirit down,  
And fit the man to rise !

BECKET.

Rome's policy  
Makes of the world, and all that therein is,  
A handle for its ends ; the minds of men ;  
Their various hearts ; their shifting vice and virtue ;  
All, all, are used by that great architect,  
And, shaped to purpose, do conspire to make  
One master-building. Why complain ? I ask,  
Do men withhold their reasoning lips from wine  
When the rich draught is cupp'd in base alloy ?  
Or must the appetite be slaked from gold ?  
If Heav'n hold forth a blessing to the world,  
Should the world grasp it not, because the gift



Be somewhat soil'd in indirect transmission,  
Touch'd by the intermediate palm of man ?  
Work'd in Heav'n's hands, the ill of Rome becomes  
Attemper'd unto good, and lends itself  
To the upheaving of that glorious fabric  
Whose barrier-walls shut out the Pagan flood,  
And bleaker wilderness of unbelief !  
Then, view our Church, the progeny of Time,  
Old and much-honour'd, whose vast dignity  
Will blind the eye that peers to find its specks.  
So, amid men, bad treads on good ; and yet  
The son of kings inherits majesty  
And claims subjection, though his personal life  
Be dash'd with error ; and it cannot be  
But that to large and noble families  
Is born a child or two, to magnify  
The honours of the stock.

JOHN.

He should not die,  
Whose life has work to do. Thy country claims,  
To purify its social elements,  
More of those thoughts which mark'd thy earlier years,  
Than what the labours of thy after-office  
Had leisure for.

BECKET.

I understand thee, John !

If I have not bestow'd such wealth of mind  
As Heav'n hath lent, t' enrich my native land  
With general blessings, so that after-times  
Might gaze upon some stately charity,  
And cry, "This Becket founded !" or might hug  
Some freedom to its breast, and say, "Thank Heav'n !  
This do we owe to Becket," or might dwell  
With grateful fondness on the memory  
Of some defunct abuse, whose monster-death  
Came from the hand of Becket—I can feel  
That I have made a sacrifice of self,  
Of every pow'r, or wish, or fear, or hope,  
To one great mission, unto which I knew  
My consecration—to maintain my watch  
Upon the Church's tow'rs, and save the honour  
Of a rewarding God !

JOHN.

Who best is served  
By serving men, wherein the labourer's soul  
Advances its own nature : the great God  
Fights his own battles—

BECKET.

With the arm of men.

JOHN.

Thy arm hath labour'd in the field which Time  
Hath hallow'd to thy effort ; thou mayst live :  
For shouldst thou fail, the consecrated work  
Bears merit in th' attempt, while—

BECKET.

No, my friend !

Sick, as I said, with sense of weakness, startled  
By crowds of imaged possibilities,  
I fear my future frailty may undo  
What the past chance hath done.

JOHN.

I would have said.

*Thou* dost not, in thy course, run equal risk  
Of loss, nor losing earn'st an equal share  
Of the calm censure of the coming world,  
As when a man outstrips his fellow-men  
In working for their weal, and leaves behind  
Their old ideas and halting knowledge, worsted,  
And therefore turn'd to worse ; as doth his Grace  
Henry the King—

BECKET (*quickly*).

The King ! why name the King ?  
Heav'ns ! thou dost make me think of life, to hurl  
Defiance at his pride. But no—I hope  
To crush him in my death-fall !

JOHN.

Pardon me !

I, even as thou knowst, have taken part  
With Becket against Henry ; now I'd side  
With Becket, 'gainst himself ! This should not be—  
To die —

BECKET.

With hatred on my lips—thou'rt right !  
Yet 'tis the system that I hate, which makes  
The man its mouthpiece.

JOHN.

Poor self-cheating this !  
*Who* hates his neighbour as a clod of earth ?  
*Not* as the living fountain, whence arise  
The waters whose rude current contradicts  
The course himself would steer ?

BECKET.

Well, well—I know—  
I feel myself unfit to live.

JOHN.

And therefore

Fitter to die ?

BECKET.

Yes ! old, and faithful friend !

To live, is to lie stretch'd upon the rack  
Of an uneasy mind ; to find men false,  
And Heav'n's arm slack to judgment. Highest things  
*Will* cloud the reason and the trust : belief  
Is thought, and thought too often doubt. To die,  
Is to seal up the good, and let the bad  
Be scatter'd into air. This sacrifice  
I seek not, nor avoid : yet would I make  
A willing offering, that my blood may temper  
The darkness of the past, while future suns  
Shall gild it into gold ! Thou dost remember  
The story of my mother ? She was born  
Of a proud Saracen in Palestine,  
Who held my father captive ; yet she loved  
The Christian in his chains—she struck them off,  
And left her heart therein ! He went : the land  
Of her nativity had lost its light  
When he was fled—she follow'd him ; her tongue  
Knew but two English words : her loving zeal

Spoke more than language, and with "London—  
London "

On her poor lips, she found her painful way  
To our great capital, and there her cry  
Was chang'd to "Gilbert !" 'Twas enough ; Heav'n bore  
The simple word unto *his* ear, who took  
The dark-brow'd beauty to his home ! So I  
Yearn for another country. From the shore  
That saw my struggles into life, and since  
Hath seen the harder strife of reasoning years,  
I turn with earnest foot, and teach my lips  
Reiterate two only words of love,  
" God !" and the " Church !" —Come, there's a sound  
without.

JOHN.

Would Heav'n that thou *couldst* fear !

SCENE X.—*The same Apartment.*

*à Becket. Grim.*

GRIM.

Three Knights without crave—rather, please your  
Lordship,  
Demand an instant audience.

BECKET.

Have they got

Their weapons by their sides ?

GRIM.

They have.

BECKET.

Admit them !

*[Exit Grim, and returns with Fitzurse, De Moreville, and Brito. <sup>(15)</sup> They sit down, and remain silent.]*

BECKET.

Well, Sirs ! Your mission seems a silent one !

What want your valours with a man of peace,

Poor servant of the Church of Canterbury ?

Why speak ye not ? Or, are your thoughts too clumsy

For words to be their clothier ?

FITZURSE.

I, for one,

Had rather act than talk !

BECKET.

Act then ! or go !

Ye waste my time thus.

BRITO.

In the name of Henry,

The King of England—

BECKET.

A poor preface that  
To a petition !

BRITO.

We demand, if thou  
Who hast presumed to excommunicate  
Roger of York, wilt instantly absolve  
Him and the others, whom thy voice hath dared  
Suspend from office.

BECKET.

Well, Sirs ! What if I  
Dare further, and refuse.

MOREVILLE.

Thou wilt incur  
The anger of the King.

BECKET.

Who chooses you  
As proxies of his wrath !—Ye play your part  
But passing badly. I would fain feel angry,  
To compliment your mission and yourselves—  
'Tis a rude thing, contempt, for knights like you !  
Such valiant men ! but what—yes, yes, Fitzurse !  
I see you've got a sword !



MOREVILLE.

What is thy answer ?

BECKET.

Did I not give one ? Talk'd ye not of Kings,  
And of commands, to me, to England's Primate,  
Who, in each matter that doth touch the Church,  
Within the gate of his obedient ears  
Admits but that which hath the pass of Rome.  
The *King's* commands ! The King's *commands* to me  
In my dominion ! Ye are jesting, Sirs !

BRITO.

His hands have made thee what thou art !

BECKET.

His hands !

Made *me* ! Now, by the keys of Peter, Knight,  
You'll stir my temper !—his hands !—me !—if so,  
Where did he find the draff and refuse which  
His fingers scraped up to form you ? God made me ;  
He puts upon my head that sanctity  
Which, like the sunshine, dims the little lights  
Of crown or helmet. He doth keep my person  
Safe in the round of that authority  
Within whose ring of fire I stand, and laugh  
At knightly sword, or sceptre of a King !

Ay, He doth fill my voice, which, 'less ye bend  
 For pity and for pardon, shall be hurl'd,  
 Hot with the lightnings of indignant Rome,  
 At *you*, and make you—be it possible—  
 More cursèd than ye are !

FITZURSE.

Thou foul-mouth'd Priest !  
 'Twere right to strike thy tongue out where thou stand'st.  
 We will not suffer—

BECKET.

If it's right—then *do* it !  
 I am alone, unarm'd ; ye're knights, have swords,  
 And can at least employ their brutal edge  
 On women and on children, and on men  
 Who won't resist ! Fitzurse ! De Moreville ! Brito !  
 Bold knights ! I do defy ye ! Draw your weapons !  
 'Tis well—stand ; look me in the face—I front ye  
 Each one ! Now—conscience in your eye, and right  
 Be with your arm !—strike !—'Tis so ! Half-paid cut-  
                   throats !

Go back to Henry, and demand more hire  
 Than he hath given ye as the price of blood ;  
 Or, do ye deem that I ye threaten here  
 Am he who put unpriestly lance in rest,

And broke the wond'ring chivalry of France ?  
Think ye I'm he, who, when Toulouse was breach'd,  
Rush'd with such onset as had swept away  
By the mere wind of its distracted path  
A Brito or Fitzurse ? Nay, gentle heroes,  
I am a harmless Priest ! I have cast off  
Protective mail, and dropp'd th' offending sword :  
Take courage now, and touch me ! I'll not move  
A finger to your hurt, not swerve once inch  
To let the murder pass. Ho ! double traitors  
To Church and King, ye fear it ! Poor assassins—  
Off ! Get your armour—case with comforting mail  
The palpitations of your tender hearts—  
Return ! Reseek this dangerous service—strain  
Each nerve to the great deed : ye'll find me here  
Unarm'd, and—*silent !* willing to accept,  
As a full penance for a life of sins,  
The degradation of a death from you !

[*The three Knights retire.*]

They're gone—I must compose my spirit—ah !  
I would fall calmly. Never more these lips  
Must breathe a curse, or swell with wordy wrath.

GRIM.

They will return !

BECKET.

I told them to return.

GRIM.

They'll slay thee, Master !

BECKET.

Possibly.

GRIM.

Then fly !

BECKET.

Grim ! Dost thou know me ?

GRIM.

Oh ! alas, too well.

Thou wilt call down destruction on the land

By welcoming thine own.

BECKET.

I tell thee, Grim,

My fall is predetermin'd—I consent :

But I will have it how I choose, and when.

Yes ! I have shown these brainless murderers

That their hired swords to my confronting will

Lose opposition. I will share with Henry

The pow'r of my own death.

GRIM.

Best show that pow'r

By shunning—

BECKET.

What must come some time—perhaps  
Less fittingly. Not so. God and the Church !  
God and the Church shall ring from every blow ;  
Each wound shall gape with the eternal words ;  
And every drop of blood become a stream  
To fertilize the soil which they define !

GRIM.

Thou talkedst of thy early years, when thou  
Didst lead a carnal life—yet longer live  
But to redeem it more !

BECKET.

I cast my sins

Upon the altar of this sacrifice,  
And let the flaming compensation shine  
On the round earth, and mount to heav'n !

GRIM.

The people

Love thee—why baulk their love ?

BECKET.

Yes ! I have loved them,

And lived as one of them ; too much perchance  
For those beneath me, whose minds crouch'd to mine.  
The *highest* were my brethren. 'Tis too late.  
Can death erase the instrument which love  
Writes on the long-retaining heart? My friend!  
'Tis a mere vulgar and a painted fame  
That blooms but in the eye, nor leaves behind  
Some treasured scent of its remember'd good.  
Come, Grim! Time passes by. Devotion blames  
These words that filch her dues.

GRIM (*aside*).

Oh! were my words  
Like thine, thou might'st be urg'd—but 'tis in vain.

SCENE XI.—*Same Apartment.*

*John of Salisbury. Grim.*

JOHN.

I tell thee, Grim, 'tis useless—but, my friend,  
Try—'twill relieve thy mind—our great Archbishop's  
Is yet more royal than the King's. His course  
Is like those ocean-monsters, whose straight path  
Is terrible with pow'r, the while their limbs  
Do lack the capability to turn.

GRIM.

Shall I let in the woman?

JOHN.

An' thou wilt

Let in a flood, 'twill be the same. Our master  
Hath, too, his fortunate failing of resolve  
That listens to no charming, otherwise  
We fools might worship the unsainted saint  
Without the leave of Rome. Yet try it, Grim.  
The broken utterance of a mind unhinged,  
And the meek voice of its pathetic look,  
May cure a case which wisdom quite gives up.

*[Exit Grim, and returns with Matilda.]*

MATILDA.

My Lord Archbishop Becket! Oh, my Lord!  
Beware the knife!

*Enter à Becket.*

BECKET.

Poor thing! *Thou* here, Matilda!

What wantest thou?

MATILDA.

What only thou canst give.

I have a message unto thee, my Lord!

Let's think—Who gave it me?—it is no matter—

I tell thee thou must fly : list ! in thine ear,  
*He's* come ! 'tis fearful ! is it not, my Lord ?  
*I* am not haunted now by that stern face,  
It hath left me, but thou must see it there  
Glaring at thee with its blood-seeking eyes.  
He has no pity—hush ! he has no pity.

BECKET.

Could I do aught for thee before we part ?  
But thy mind wanders. Go in peace, Matilda.

MATILDA.

In peace ! What peace ? I do not rave. Oh ! think not  
I'm mad—'tis true, too true—this circumstance,  
This fearful time, hath stretch'd my brain until  
Reason perforce streams in. They've plann'd thy death !

BECKET.

I know it, Lady ; and among the plotters  
Is Richard Brito ! Lead her gently off,  
Grim, and be kind to her.

MATILDA.

I will not go,  
'Till thou hast sworn upon the cross of God  
That thou wilt save thyself ! I heard him say  
That he could love thee—'tis the King I mean.



Why should ye quarrel ? If the sun and moon  
Contend in heav'n, what do the lesser lights  
But hold an useless office ? I have yielded  
Much up to love—for what ? To please *one* other,  
His vanity, or his pride ; and then, will *ye*,  
The forest-monarchs, when the winds of heav'n  
Pour from all quarters their constraining breath,  
Not bend to lace your separated boughs,  
Whose mighty shade would over-arch the sea.  
And let two kingdoms lie in peace below ?

BECKET.

My poor Cassandra ! If I understand thee,  
Tie two such tops together, soon the trees  
Would burst all bonds to stand erect once more,  
Or cast their leaves off in the struggle ! Lo !  
Rather than yield what I am forced to urge  
By Him that's greater than us both, this King  
Entrusts the seeret mission of his love  
To three assassins ! 'Tis a close regard,  
And modest too in its expression !

MATILDA.

No !

Lord Primate—no ! Heav'n gives my weaker mind

To show the faults of thine. *He* sent them not.  
Not Henry—no ! They come—

[*Noise heard without.*

BECKET.

'Tis true ! Now go—  
This is no place for thee—go, Lady !

MATILDA.

Never !

Think'st thou a woman fears to look upon  
The sword she cannot handle ? But *thy* life  
Is not thine own ; thy faith, thy country—

BECKET.

Call,

The one, for suffering unto death ; the other—  
But I've done talking. Would my hour were come !

MATILDA.

Yet go, my Lord ! I hear *him*—reason not !  
Fly, as thou hadst a mother, one who kept  
Unchanging watch beside the little life  
That she had charge of ! Could she see thee now,  
Those limbs she lov'd, within the horrid reach  
Of that raised knife ; if she could speak—

BECKET.

She'd say,

That she at least had bred me to behave  
As *will* her husband's child !

MATILDA.

Oh ! man ; proud man !

Thou hast not loved—thou wouldst be soften'd else  
By tears, wouldst bend to sighs. Hadst thou a breast  
That ever beat for woman's, ever felt  
How sternest strength can feel a luxury  
In being conquer'd by a weaker will,  
Thou wouldst not stand with that relentless foot  
As if 'twere treading down the loving hearts  
That rise to lift thee hence !

BECKET.

Nay, vex me not !

What the past has been, Lady, doth not matter ;  
And for the present—why, I cannot see it  
While the great future's far-extending folds  
Do mantle it from vision !

[*Noise of battering heard near.*]

GRIM.

Sir ! my Lord !

Fly ! We are all in danger. Thou dost bring

This risk upon thy servants.

BECKET.

Worthy Grim !

Thou meanest well. I know *thou* dost not fear :

And for the rest, these hunters only seek

The stag that heads the herd. They 'll find him here.

JOHN.

Hark ! good my Lord, the vespers have begun.

They claim thy presence.

BECKET.

'Tis enough ; we go

Where duty calls—stay, gently there ! We 'll move

As is our wont ; nor will forego the least

Of our accustom'd state. I 'll have my robes on.

GRIM (*aside to Matilda*).

Go, Lady ! rouse the people, if thou canst.

It may not be too late.

SCENE XII.—*Interior of the Cathedral.*

*Monks, &c.*

HYMN.

Lift, lift the veil of Time,

And gaze upon the land where shine

The glorious suns of Palestine.

In wondrous beauty, humble yet sublime,  
The lowly Man, the awful Godhead stands  
And lays the spell of his creative hands

On one who, kneeling there  
Drinks with hot ear the words that smite the trembling  
air.

“ Receive all pow’r o’er all thy kind  
To save or slay, to loose or bind ;  
While built on thee, a living stone  
Which Heav’n hath chosen for its own,  
A mightier Babel to the skies,  
With ages for its steps, shall rise,  
And Hell assault with idle shock  
The base of the immortal Rock !”

Up springs that man, yet more than human now,  
As o’er the field of his illumin’d brow  
The future lies in shadows, while above

He looks with fear-discarding love.

One foot is stamp’d upon the sod  
As pressing down a foe, and, stretch’d through space,  
His fingers seem the path of Time to trace,  
Grasping the mystic keys, the signet-ring of God !

When shall the building be completed,  
Upon whose banners, white as Salmon's snow,  
Is writ the mark of its high calling—  
“Earth rais'd to Heav'n, and Hell defeated?”  
Eleven centuries have seen it grow  
And spread its base, and lift its head above,  
'Mid earthly things and thrones around it falling  
The visible shrine that holds the mystery of love!

Enter the temple—listen! gaze around!  
Hark! what a soul of softly-solemn sound  
Broods in the air. It is the voice  
Of aged Time, Time old yet ever young,  
That bids the world its son rejoice,  
Hymning th' eternal melodies which, sung  
By angel-lips on Bethlehem's plain,  
Draw the sweet links of life in long-related chain!

Behold the lights that blaze!  
Imaging living spirits—lamps of mind,  
In which let pious Fancy find  
The glory of those early rays  
When Heav'n to Earth descending came,  
And fill'd the herald-star with its new life of flame!

*They* light the path of each progressive soul ;  
Spread into sparkles, blending into one

The many make the whole—

As splendours scatter'd wide conspire to form a Sun !

Build the fabric ; raise it high ;  
All the things of earth do lie—  
Learning's haunt, or lover's bow'r,  
Crowded mart, or castled tow'r,  
Ivied cot, or regal halls,  
In the shadow of its walls.

Bow down ! Bow down !  
Child of the world ! We claim from thee  
No soulless worship of the knee.

Bow down, bow down,  
With bended heart and mind, and own  
The glories of the unseen throne,  
The triple rule that gems the God-descended crown !

All without is Night and Sin ;  
All is Light and Life within.  
Every sea and every land  
Lies in Rome's gigantic hand.

Every hope of man is there ;  
Seed for joy, and seal for pray'r.  
Kings coerce with iron sway  
Subjects not more frail than they—  
*Hers*, the empire of the breast,  
Oldest, strongest, purest, best !

Rise, Monarch ! lay thy subject-sceptre here  
At thy great mother's feet.  
Sheathe the vain sword, and drop the braggart  
spear,  
Warrior of earth ! for what avail  
Material point, and coarse man-forgèd mail  
Against the arms of Heav'n, with which Heav'n's sons  
compete ?

*What* this mighty spell which, spoken,  
Makes the heart of life lie broken,  
Blood be cold, and suns grow dark,  
If ye ask, we answer—hark !

Let the bell toll

The knell above a buried soul !

Put out the lights to mark a life that 's fled,  
A body ribb'd around a spirit that is dead ! <sup>(16)</sup>



Approach ! Approach (it is the accepted hour)

The presence of this awful pow'r !

Peasant or Prince, approach, and take thy choice,

Salvation in its arms, or Hell from out its voice !

*Enter à Becket, John of Salisbury, Grim, Monks, &c.  
in confusion.*

BECKET.

Gently ! What means this tumult ? Deem ye this

The palace of a Prince ? We are *his* servants

Whose mind, as seen in Nature and her works,

Is ever solemn, as it's ever sure !

*[Increasing noise of battering heard. À Becket  
ascends the steps of the altar.*

GRIM.

Oh ! is there yet hope, John of Salisbury ?

What will persuade him ?

JOHN.

None, my friend ; and nothing !

Scaree would I do it, an' I could. Behold

How like a god the glorious victim stands !

The bright yet calm intelligence within

Shines through the thin skin on the outward face.

Look on that high divinity of brow,

Up which the thought that sways a world hath climb'd

As to its topmost temple ! Meeting there,  
In wavy angle, two full feeling veins,  
Distended to their limits, give alone  
Their mortal indication—only one,  
One sacrifice like that !

BECKET.

Ho ! quickly there,  
Unclose the gates. What ! think ye Heav'n hath need  
Of bars and bolts, when will'd, to fortify  
Its sentence of exclusion ?

*[Looking round and speaking low.]*

But one instant—  
And what an instant ! O thou glorious throne  
Of the incarnate Majesty of Love,  
For thee, and the mysterious sanctities  
Of which thou art the image and the shrine,  
A little while I've borne with life—for these  
I now would lay it down ! for unto me,  
Childless and motherless, thou hast been all things,—  
Thou, and thy worship, and thy faith ! Farewell !  
May worthier—Nay, 'tis time ! Come back, my eyes !  
'Tis the last look that I shall give to thee,  
My beautiful temple !

*(Aloud.)*—Now, what fear ye, friends ?

Is your profession one which suns itself  
In the full blaze of unresisted day,  
But shrinks and shivers when the comfortless clouds  
Assault the horizon? Do ye preach the Church  
Ruling the world, and with false hearts crouch down  
Unto God's vilest creatures, men who use  
The forceful means which Nature gave to brutes?  
On with the service!

[*William de Tracy, and the three other Knights,  
in complete armour, burst in.*

TRACY.

Where's the traitor Becket?

[*None speak.*

What! are ye silent, cowards? Monks! I say,  
Where's the Archbishop Becket?

BECKET (*descending.*)

Here am I!

SCENE XIII.—*Outside the Cathedral.*

*Matilda, Crowd, Richard Blois.*

CROWD.

What says she? Let us hear! What saidst thou?

MATILDA.

This !

I ask you, are ye English ? Will ye suffer  
Your own cathedral floor be made an altar  
On which to immolate your lives, your hopes,  
Your loves !—then, are ye English ? are ye English ?

CROWD.

What means the lady ?

MATILDA.

There ! the knife is in him,  
Finding its gory way ! Ah ! here I feel it ;  
I feel it in my side ! Alas !

CROWD.

What knife ?

Whom are they slaying ?

MATILDA.

Whom ? The man of men !  
The hope of earth ! The pride of Heav'n ! I tell you,  
Ye're not alive when he is dead—your souls  
Are night when *his* is set !

CROWD.

Who ? who ?

MATILDA.

In that cathedral church—its lord and yours—

They're murdering him—hark !

CROWD.

Becket ! murder Becket !

The Lord Archbishop ! 'Tis not possible !

R. BLOIS.

Ye're right, friends ! 'Tis not *possible*. The Primate  
Could summon armed angels in whole troops,  
With a few hundred chariots, more or less,  
To aid him, an' he will'd it. Do ye think  
That he who works such miracles on others,  
Plugs an old sore, or mends a broken bone  
With the cheap plaister of a word or two,  
Can't help himself?—that is, if so he will it.

CROWD.

Ay ! he speaks truth. What harm can come to Becket ?  
He could command the earth to gape, could bid  
The whole cathedral fall upon his foes —

MATILDA.

*Will* ye not help him — will ye *not* ?

R. BLOIS.

—And lie

As lightly on himself and his good monks  
As their own feather-beds !

MATILDA.

A sign ! a sign !

Ha ! let the world be deaf ! The organ ceases—  
*There stopp'd the music of a soul !* Hark ! hark !  
 A rush of steps and voices bringing up  
 The rear of a black action ! Doth there lie  
 A cloud upon your eyes ? Do your hearts beat ?  
 Feel them !—again !

CROWD.

There's something here—we'll force  
 The church's doors ! We'll help the Archbishop—

MATILDA.

Go !

The church's doors are open ! Enter—help him !  
 Worship him if ye will ! Convert his bones  
 To amulets for cowards—and his blood,  
 Hang it in bottles at your children's hearts  
 That the weak stream which dribbles there may blush  
 Into unfilial manhood !

CROWD.

To the church !

*The four Knights rush out, exclaiming,*  
 Death to all traitors ! For the king ! the king !  
 Long live King Henry ! *[and exeunt.*

CROWD.

Have they done it, think ye ?  
Had we known this, we would—

*Enter Grim, holding up a bloody cloth with his left arm ;  
his right hanging broken.*

GRIM.

Down on your knees,  
With prayers and curses battling on your lips  
For the foul deed, and him who fell by it !  
Behold the blood of Becket !

[*The crowd kneel.*

MATILDA.

Ha ! ha ! ha !

I've got a pleasant tingling in my ears,  
And a low buzzing like the sound of bees  
About my mother's garden. I was young—  
Was happy then. Let's see—the blood of Becket !  
A common lot—but not a common man—  
I do not understand ! He was not old.<sup>(17)</sup>  
Death ! Becket ! a strange sound ! *The blood of Becket !*  
I'll touch it—lo ! it does not burn my hand.  
The blood of Becket should be dropp'd with fire  
As if the world were blazing— does it spare me  
Because I am a woman ? He indeed

Was gentle unto women. Come, ye men,  
 And touch this gory testament !—ha ! ha !  
 I say, I've got a buzzing in my ears,  
 As 'twere the voice of unborn multitudes  
 Muttering the history of this bloody day !

CROWD (*increasing*).

We will have vengeance ! Let us in, and arm  
 Our hatred with the sight !

[*Rush into the Cathedral.*

R. BLOIS (*looking at Matilda*).

This woman here  
 Must to the King, and tell him of the deed :  
 He'll hear it from none else.

SCENE XIV.—*The house of Agnes' father.*

*De Tracy, Agnes (meeting).*

TRACY.

Agnes !

AGNES.

De Tracy !

TRACY.

One word—one of pity !



AGNES.

What hast thou done ? There's murder in thine eye !

TRACY.

There should be ! for my hand hath dealt it. Agnes !

'Twill haunt my heart ! One word—I risk my life

To see thee ere I fly,—but one—forgiveness !

Heav'n will not, and man will not—but, oh ! Agnes.

Pardon me thou !

AGNES.

Say, William ! What is this ?

TRACY.

I struck him as he stood in calm defiance,

Without a movement of eye, breath, or limb.

I dash'd his brains out on the marble soil,

Whence angel hands will gather them to witness

At the last judgment ! When the deed was done,

I felt as if the air around was fill'd

With the great soul of that poor mangled corpse !

Innumerable eyes stared into me,

And forkèd tongues of everlasting fire

Cried out, " Why didst thou this ? "

AGNES.

*Whom* hast thou slain ?

TRACY.

But wilt thou pardon me ? I've slain the man—  
'Twas from mad love of thee—who stole thy heart.  
Oh ! I was hot with hate ! I've kill'd à Becket !

AGNES.

À Becket ! God of mercy !—thou art wrong.  
I ne'er spoke word to him, or he to me.  
I lov'd him as a Christian child should love  
Christ's mirror upon earth !

TRACY.

Not love à Becket ?

I say he's dead—I slew him—murder'd him,  
Because that thou didst love him ! Oh ! my head !  
The pain of hell-fire is already here !  
Oh ! Agnes, tell me that thou lov'dst à Becket—  
Ah ! what a look is there ! Could Heav'n not save him ?

AGNES.

May it save thee ! Thou'st done a fearful thing !

TRACY.

Crush'd—spirit-crush'd ! I *am* a fearful thing,  
Which I myself can't look upon ; to others—  
To thee, what am I but a —— I must fly !  
I have no claim on thee—I wrong'd thee—yet,  
Give me one gentle word, to go with me

As my sole friend in life-long banishment.  
 I can foresee the future—the far bed, (18)  
 And the stretch'd limbs, from which Death, day by day  
 Cuts butcher-like the unequal flesh, to leave  
 A half-form'd skeleton ! Pity me, Agnes !  
 O God ! for pity !

AGNES.

May that God give me  
 As I give thee all pardon ! I will pray  
 Whene'er I think of thee—when ? ever ! ever !  
 “ May'st thou find mercy ! ” Mercy for De Tracy !  
 Mercy for Agnes ! Go, dear William, go !  
*[As he turns slowly away, she calls him back.*  
 Stay, William : here's a trinket. 'Twill remind—  
 But, is't not better to forget ? No matter—  
 Take it. There may be brighter suns than England's,  
 And comfort—ay ! *love* flow upon thy soul  
 From other lips than mine. Now, go !

TRACY.

No, Agnes !

Thou dost forget that I shall be ring'd round  
 With a deep gulf that angels may not pass,  
 Denied all hope in death, cast corpse-like forth  
 To putrefy, yet feel and breathe ! Behold

With what a point these holy arrows pierce  
 Through mail or purple, tipp'd by hate, or wing'd  
 By cool-brow'd Justice ! 'Tis the lust of pow'r  
 That lifts Rome's giant arm, to crush the good,  
 Or add a pang to such a breast as mine !

AGNES (*abstractedly*).

It may be shared. It had escap'd my mind,  
 The memory of that fierce anathema.  
 Curs'd by the Church ! No hand, no look, no voice—  
 Wretched ! alone !—alone ? What meaneth that ?  
 Spoken by Rome, Hell lives within the word !  
 'Twas a rash act ! yet done for love of me—  
*Alone ! (with vehemence).* 'Tis past ! I fly with thee,  
 De Tracy.

TRACY (*firmlly*).

My Agnes, never !

AGNES.

Thine ! and yet thou wilt not ?  
 Am I so deeply dyed—so passing foul,  
 That that dark lot, the which thy fear compared  
 With very rottenness, can yet be made  
 More loathsome by *my* presence ? Wretched Agnes !  
 Oh ! Tracy ! I was young ; and day by day,

The pressure of a sacred voice ; the show  
(How false, I know too late !) that heav'n is served  
By e'en the guilty lavishment of love  
On its unwedded ministers, compell'd  
The sufferance of a deed, but never touch'd  
The unlistening heart, which only beat for thee !

TRACY.

Agnes, refrain ! Oh ! let it not be said  
That the last act which I had pow'r to choose,  
But topp'd the gloomy mountain of my crimes  
With a more damning villany ! *Thy* presence !  
*That* were a sun ! but I will choose the night.  
I dared the deed. I front the punishment  
In all its desolation. It were worse  
Than the red blow which let the soul escape  
From the crush'd body, when the plague hath  
touch'd me,  
And o'er my limbs I throw the spotted robe,  
To seek for comfort—'twere a devil's comfort—  
By folding *her* in its polluted skirt  
Who loves me, even now ! No, no, we part,  
Dear Agnes ! Ah ! my spirit's bruised indeed,  
That my hot lips do lack a righteous curse  
For that foul system, author of our woe,

Which strides to heav'n by overpassing hell  
In damnable conceptions !

AGNES.

O my love !

Go, for the last time ! take my heart with thee—  
Take my last thought of earth ! I quit, this instant,  
My father's house for some conventual tomb,  
To bury e'en the memory of De Tracy !  
Oh ! go—

[*As he turns to depart, she exclaims, " William !"*  
*He looks at her without speaking, and rushes*  
*out of the room. She clasps her hands to her*  
*head, and exit.*

SCENE XV.—*Normandy Palace.*

*Henry II., Lords, &c., William of Pavia.*

HENRY.

'Twas a fine flight, my Lords ! My favourite bird  
Did credit to his training ; let me add,  
To his race likewise. Noble deeds come well  
Of noble blood. Lord Cardinal, the Church,

That frowns upon your Eminence's presence  
At sports like these, doth rob you of much joy.  
'Twere right to bribe and compensate a heart  
With some great bliss, that may not thrill to hear  
The falconer's whoop !

WILLIAM.

Your Highness has been born  
A man of war, like David, raised to fight  
The battles of the Church ; and they who slay  
Their lions and Goliaths, turn to pleasures,  
When they have leisure, which to their vocation  
Bear consanguinity of nature. I  
Am a poor portion of a pow'r, whose office  
It is to build the temple up in peace  
Without e'en sound of hammer—to save life,  
And not to slay it !

HENRY.

Doubtless, Cardinal !  
Rome knows her own work best, and will not miss  
The means to help it. (*To first Lord.*) Have ye heard  
from England ?  
Hath my commandment caught those truant knights  
That went from us ?

FIRST LORD.

Not yet, your Grace! I fear  
Our messenger will scarcely overtake  
Their hasty steps—

HENRY.

God's eyes! my loving Lord!  
Do they who brave my orders, make more speed  
Than they who bear them?

FIRST LORD.

Please your Highness, they  
Had some hours' start of—

HENRY.

Start, man! What of that?  
Mother of mercy! doth the falcon start  
Together with the heron? Ye base knaves,  
An' I had gone myself—What have we now?

*Enter Second Lord.*

SECOND LORD.

May't please your Grace! a messenger from England,  
Saith that the father of the Lady Agnes,  
In quick belief that that same priest had hid  
His daughter from him, tax'd him with the theft.  
Words lash'd their thoughts to a red heat, on which  
The warlike churchman snatch'd a weapon by,  
And slew him, where he stood!



HENRY.

Slew whom ?

SECOND LORD.

The father.

HENRY.

Who slew him ?

SECOND LORD.

He, the priest.

HENRY.

Great Heav'n ! my brain  
Grows stunn'd and weary with these licensed devils.  
Now, will not Becket take this wretch in hand,  
And shut him up for a short year or two,  
In order that the comfortable culprit  
May meditate on murder, and come forth  
Wash'd by repentance to a clean-brow'd saint ?  
Would the whole pack were—

MATILDA (*without*).

Back ? I back ! I will not !

Who now is greater than Matilda Rohan  
Array'd in such a mission ? Give way *ye* ;  
And let me enter !

[*Enters, holding up the bloody cloth.*

Lo, where stands a King !  
Henry of England ! Lord of Normandy !  
Can sorrow reach Plantagenet and Anjou ?  
Ay ! here's a little thing will shake the breasts  
Of monarchs 'neath their purple ! Yet I said  
*Thou* didst not wish it ! Didst thou, mighty Prince ?  
This cloth is stain'd with—

HENRY.

Stop ! 'Tis blood ! Oh ! when  
Will this day end ? Tell me—yet say not *that*—  
There, in thine eyes I read it ! May thy lips  
Forswear the witness ! 'Tis not *he* that's dead—  
Becket ! Speak !—Becket ?

MATILDA.

Murder'd !

HENRY.

Oh ! my friend !

MATILDA.

There spake the man : let the king die with Becket !  
Behold ! it moves him : him the first of men,  
The hero who swept down baronial pow'r  
With the sharp wind of war, and smiled to see  
Red carnage feed upon her hundreds, making  
So many tyrants less—but not like *him*,

Not one like him ! When *he* died, clouds rush'd in  
Before the eye of daylight : the earth shrank  
As 'twould escape from bearing such a deed ;  
The tears of angels fell on that gash'd corpse,  
Like the sad dew upon a battle-field  
Where armies rot unsepulchred ; and Vice  
Rais'd its lean head, and leer'd upon the land,  
In foul expectance of a fresh embrace !

HENRY.

Lord Cardinal ! Thou dost not speak.

WILLIAM.

Sir King !

The sound of such a thing should stun with horror  
All senses of all hearers. This black deed  
Thy myrmidons have done—

HENRY.

Mine ! Cardinal ?

*What* robb'd the earth of that most blessed life ?  
*What* warp'd the fancies of that noble mind,  
Turning aside the thoughts that had enrich'd  
A kingdom with their fulness ? What but Rome ?  
With the false show of her all-grasping claims  
She misdirected such a soul as Becket's  
To lag behind itself, and vindicate

The exaltation of her shrine of pow'r !

But, 'tis enough ; I'm calm : gone, gone for ever !

[ *Walks aside.*

FIRST LORD.

His thoughts are with the past, when like two boys,

In playful glee, the King and Chancellor

Rode side by side ; and trick and laugh boil'd up

From plenitude of spirit ! 'Tis a proof

How much he loved him.

WILLIAM.

Even unto death !

Lady, thou saw'st the body ?

MATILDA.

Saw it ? Ay !

I, and the angels, and the fiends, all saw it ;

For think ye not Creation was disturb'd

In every corner, and came trooping in

To witness such a death ? The devils laugh'd.

And then I laugh'd !—but why should I do that ?

I was not happy. Maybe I am mad.

WILLIAM.

And they who did it have escaped, no doubt.

I need not ask their names.

MATILDA.

They have escaped.

HENRY (*returning*).

My Lords, break up this meeting. I would question  
My thoughts alone. This is a circumstance  
Of fearful moment, which will link the past  
With th' unsure features of the coming age,  
Like mark upon the mountain-top of Time,  
Whose base has sunk from sight. Have I a friend  
Worth such a foe? He wrestled for his order,  
And I for mine. What is the end? The Church  
Now sees its good in ranging side by side  
With vassal against lord; in aftertimes  
Perchance 'twill court the men who stand upon  
The topmost round of life; and next, the crown,  
Shorn of its rays of pow'r, become a symbol  
Of order. It is well. All private toil  
Conspires to raise the public edifice.  
And, last, will flow the people's love or duty  
From free-bred hearts, not forced out thence by weight  
Of favour or oppression. It will come—  
O Becket, Becket! neither you nor I  
Do make up England!—and yet murder'd!

*[Exit Henry and attendants.]*

WILLIAM (*looking after him*).

Come

What will, the present smiles on Rome ; the future  
May bring its handle with it. The live Becket  
Was not, O Monarch, half the plague to thee,  
As shall be dead St. Thomas ! <sup>(19)</sup>

## NOTES.

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### NOTE (1).—Page 5.

Brabançons. A species of military banditti, who were very commonly hired as mercenaries by the princes of those times. Brabant was the chief nursery of this kind of troops, and gave its name to them, from whatever quarter they were derived.

### NOTE (2).—Page 7.

A Becket was successively Archdeacon of Canterbury, Tutor to Henry's eldest son (holding at the time sundry collateral offices, such as the Governourship of the Tower of London, &c.), Chancellor of England, and Archbishop. Before his appointment to the Primacy, he had figured, with considerable success, in the characters of warrior, courtier, and sportsman.

### NOTE (3).—Page 10.

Henry, Bishop of Winchester, was a younger son of the Count of Blois, by Adela, daughter of William the Conqueror; and, consequently, brother to King Stephen.

### NOTE (4).—Page 11.

A Becket, urged by the Norman Bishops, and threatened by the King and Barons, had agreed to observe the "Constitutions of Clarendon," requiring time, however, to digest their meaning and purport. He does not appear, like the rest, to have affixed his seal to them. For making a concession to the above extent he was reproved by his cross-bearer, Edward

Grim. If we behold him yielding in this one instance, on every subsequent occasion, during the protracted contest between the king and him, he appears as firm and unbending—

Quam si dura silex, aut stet marpesia cautes.

NOTE (5).—Page 12.

The King's Customs were the regulations established by Henry II. at the council of Clarendon; and alleged by him to be founded on the "usages" of his grandfather, Henry I. Their chief object was to curtail the power of ecclesiastics, by bringing them, in criminal matters, under civil authority; and to prevent foreign interference in the kingdom, by controlling the right of appeals to the Pope.

NOTE (6).—Page 20.

When Æ Becket first fled from England, all his kindred were banished by royal edict; and his property, with that of his dependants, was confiscated.

NOTE (7).—Page 22.

By "Israel" he refers to his English father, who was a Christian—one of the true Israel of God; while his mother was originally a heathen, the daughter of a Saracen Emir.

NOTE (8).—Page 39.

Richard Cœur de Lion appears to have been the first sovereign who made use of the royal "we" in grants and charters. Henry II. in his charter to the City of Norwich, anno 1182, writes, "*Sciatis me concessisse*," "*quare volo*," &c.—*Notes and Queries*, vol. vi. p. 232.

NOTE (9).—Page 54.

The names of this, and other personages of the period, are spelt very differently by different writers.

NOTE (10).—Page 58.

Polished metallic specula were used as mirrors in the early ages of the world. Thus in Job (xxxvii. 18) we find allusion made to the "sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass;" and the laver (Exod. xxxviii. 8) was composed of the brass looking-glasses of the women. The first sheets of blown glass for looking-glasses and coach windows, were made in 1673 at Lambeth, by Venetian artisans, employed under the patronage of the



Duke of Buckingham.—(*Ure's Dict.*) I have not succeeded in ascertaining the price of a mirror in the time of Henry II.; but probably that belonging to Thomas was an heir-loom in the family.

NOTE (11).—Page 59.

Henry compelled Becket to pay back several small sums of money which had passed between them; and charged him with the liability of a further payment of 44,000 marks, to make good deficiencies in his accounts while Chancellor. Apparently the King's object was not the money, but to effect the ruin of the Primate.

NOTE (12).—Page 63.

This tax was called "Saladin's Tax," and was levied for the delivery of the Holy Land. Henry had now become more anxious to show a zeal for religion, (even yielding occasionally to Papal interference,) while Becket adopted more violent measures to counteract the (generally) calmer plans which the King entertained for bringing ecclesiastics under control.

NOTE (13).—Page 64.

Victor IV. had been recognised by Frederick Barbarossa, while Alexander III. was supported by France and England. A new anti-pope appeared subsequently in the person of Pascal III.

NOTE (14).—Page 65.

Henry II. began to reign A.D. 1155. Wycliffe was not born till about A.D. 1324. A legal friend of mine, (John Darling, Esq.) to whom I am much indebted for the revision of the present work, suggests that I should not assume any reader to be unacquainted with the above facts. However, I only request the said reader to bear them carefully in mind in several passages of the Poem.

NOTE (15).—Page 89.

I have taken a slight historical liberty in making three only of "the Knights" present at the first interview with Becket. As the matter is recorded, it seems difficult to understand why the conspirators did not at once proceed to extremities, without waiting for a second opportunity.

NOTE (16).—Page 106.

Excommunication was pronounced or read by torch-light, after which the torches were extinguished, and the bells tolled. Hence the expression to "curse by bell, book, and candle."

NOTE (17).—Page 113.

À Becket was murdered in the 53d year of his age, on Tuesday 29th Dec. 1170.

NOTE (18).—Page 117.

Tradition saith to the above effect, viz.—that De Tracy's flesh fell off from his bones in masses.

NOTE (19).—Page 128.

The estimation in which St. Thomas was held, may be judged of from the fact, that subsequently to his Canonization, the contributions at Canterbury in one year were—

	£	s.	d.
At the altar of Thomas à Becket . . . . .	954	6	3
„ „ of the Virgin Mary . . . . .	4	1	8
„ „ of Christ . . . . .	0	0	0

Vide *Lyttleton's Henry II.*

Lady Audrey Leigh.

“ A FEW weeks ago, in clearing out the ruins of an old chapel at Nuneham Regis, in Warwickshire, we thought it necessary to trench the whole space. . . . We began to trench at the west end, and came on a great many bones and skeletons, from which the coffins had crumbled away. . . . As soon as the leaden top was rolled back, a most overpowering aromatic smell diffused itself all over the place. . . . On trenching towards the chancel we came on four leaden coffins laid side by side, with inscriptions on each. . . . We opened the coffin of Lady Audrey Leigh, and found her perfectly embalmed and in entire preservation, her flesh quite plump as if she were alive, her face very beautiful, her hands exceedingly small, and not wasted. She was dressed in fine linen trimmed all over with old point lace, and two rows of lace were laid flat across her forehead. She looked exactly as if she were lying asleep, and seemed not more than sixteen or seventeen years old; her beauty was very great; even her eye-lashes and eye-brows were quite perfect, and her eyes were closed; no part of her face or figure was at all fallen in. The date on the coffin was 1640.”—*Notes and Queries*, vol. vi. no. 156, p. 386.

## LADY AUDREY LEIGH.

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### I.

THEY have lifted the lid  
From the mould'ring coffin—and what was there ?  
Noble and young and passing fair,  
White-robed she lay, and cushion'd amid  
Perfume and faded flow'rs, which spread  
An odorous veil o'er the long-housed dead.

Deeply we gazed : it was strange to see  
The brows of that living company  
Bent upon one who had not grown  
Older in twice a century flown ;  
Whose life had set while it still was morn,  
Long ere their fathers' sires were born.

Slightly her eyelash stirr'd to the breath  
Of the close-set faces stooping round ;  
And calm lay her features and cold, beneath  
Torch-light and hammer with flash and sound,  
And but for this you had deem'd her then  
A sleeping child of those rugged men.

Deeply we gazed ; and on and on,  
Musing, I look'd when the rest were gone.  
It seem'd as if Death had arrested there  
His pitiless touch from a form so fair,  
And had let her lie, with the delicate clasp  
Of her fingers, bent as in friendly grasp ;  
While two white fillets of ancient lace  
Banded the brow of that beautiful face !  
“ Thou dead ! It cannot be ! ” I cried,  
“ Wake, lady ! wake ! and side by side,  
We will wander to see what change hath past  
O'er the sleepless world since thou saw'st it last.”

Mereiful angels ! or hath my brain  
Thought until vision is weak and vain ?  
Or doth the fluttering torch-light flash  
From a gather'd tear on that long eyelash ?

And was it my own voice sounding nigh ?

Oh ! surely there must be life to sigh !

I turn'd for awhile, but when I gazed

Once more, the head of the dead was raised,

And my heart's blood shrank to its fount to see

That young eye open, and look upon me !

She rose—she stood—then approach'd me near

With silent motion, and took my hand—

That touch of gentleness soothed my fear,

Which grew to joy, as I seem'd to hear

“ A Pow'r which the grave may not withstand

Hath raised me up from its quiet home,

With thee through the sleepless world to roam.”

## II.

We stood within a stately hall ;

From spreading glass and gilded wall

The lamp-rays shot their myriad glances,

As, circling, swept in busy dances

The idlers of the ball.

Through flowery arch and warm saloon,

Floated melodious clouds of tune.

Joy seem'd to reign where all went well,

And bosoms heaved as footsteps fell !

Alone we stood ; no foot, no voice  
Or ceased to move, or to rejoice :  
Nor rose one whisper to discuss  
“ Why hath he brought the dead to us ? ”

I turn'd to my companion—she  
Look'd up in quiet grief and said,  
“ How happier are the unmoving dead !  
This is no place for me.  
Let my heavy eyelids close ;  
Take me back to my repose.”

## III.

Again I took her, 'mid the things  
Of modern life, the dead  
To mingle with the living, where  
To waft the way-farer through air  
The Genius of Invention spread  
His vast and vapoury wings.  
From town to town, from mart to mart,  
Like Nature's lightning mock'd by art,  
We sped impetuous on—  
View'd mighty ports where ships unfurl'd  
Their sails, the envoys to a world  
From Commerce' golden throne ;



Or bustling wealth bid ever rise  
Its growing temple to the skies.

*She* shrank within herself—her look  
Was one of timid sorrow, cast  
In wishes for a trial past :  
Her body trembled, as the din  
Of the world, iron-throated, shook  
Her peaceful soul within !  
“ Let, O let my eyelids close ;  
Take me back to my repose.”

## IV.

Again, we hasten'd where the air  
Was cleft by thousand voices crying,  
Above the cannons roaring there,  
Far o'er the groans of many dying—  
In shouts that made the distance ring,  
“ The king ! the king ! Long live the king !”  
Erect the crownèd victor stood,  
And on his star-emblazon'd breast  
The purple hid the tide of blood  
That bore him to that height ;  
It hid the long and lean unrest,  
That wore him, day and night.

Yet, 'twas a scene of pow'r to please ;  
The banner stretching to the breeze,  
    The cry of joy, the rush of speed,  
Bright armour flashing to the sun  
The augury of a reign begun,  
    The rivalry of man and steed,  
The champ, the neighing, and the shout ;  
    While still, at every close,  
Like a check'd fountain bursting out,  
    The brazen music rose.

*Her* cheek alone was pale ; her heart was cold :  
    O'er the large orbs their sable lashes drooping,  
    Seem'd to betray how life within was stooping  
To find escape from matter's forceful hold,  
While o'er the marble lips there past a quiv'ring,  
From which the words came feebly, shorn and shiv'ring,  
    " Let my heavy eyelids close ;  
    Take me back to my repose ! "

## v.

Above us rose a lofty dome  
O'er-topping many a learned tome,  
As if long-labouring art had wrought  
A very palace-hall for thought !

Imaginations of all ages  
Breathed silently from countless pages,  
And gentle fancy, never dead,  
Her wings in graceful beauty spread.

I gazed around with curious look,  
And saw where in a quiet nook,  
With furry robe and furrow'd brow,  
—'Twas thus since he was young till now—

An old man and alone,  
As willing here his world to find,  
Sat calmly like the king of mind,  
Upon his letter'd throne.

No word my youthful partner spoke,  
But meekly shook her drooping head ;  
While o'er her pallid features broke  
The language of a look, which said  
That wish for earthly wisdom stirs  
No motion in a soul like hers !

## VI.

We sat upon a quiet bank, alone  
By shaded waters ; and I asked her then,  
With something of a disappointed tone,

“Lady! what are the joys thou rather choosest?  
What is *that* life for which thou still refusest  
To mix, well-pleased, amid thy fellow-men?”  
For the first time her eye-ball’s solemn show  
Grew warm with feeling, and her cheek was tinged  
By various hues, as if a rainbow fringed  
With its bright stripes a plain of Arctic snow.

“Oh! there my life is sweet,” she cried,  
“Far sweeter than my words can say,  
To wait, as might some sleeping bride,  
The dawn that brings a greater day.  
*That* life (if such to thee might seem  
The sense of an unworldly dream)  
Is, as the peace-pervaded soul  
We’re rock’d in a voluptuous motion  
Upon the fondling depths of ocean,  
Still drawing nearer to the goal  
Of a dim shore, where Hope may hint  
A balmier air, a brighter tint;  
But, clearly, through its shadows seen  
No feature meets the eye to break  
The film of bliss that floats between  
This present world, and when shall wake

The spirit, born no more to die,  
And married into ecstasy !

“ Sometimes I feel as I were rushing  
    Upon a mighty danger, when  
There comes a mightier comfort gushing  
    Through every pore of self, and then  
Anticipated victory eases  
The peril into pain that pleases.

“ At times I feel about to sink  
    In gloomy water, down and down,  
Pull'd back by heavy hands, and think,  
    ‘ There must be help—I shall not drown ! ’  
A cross of wood comes floating nigh,  
    On which I mount, and as I go,  
Shake off the baffled clutch below.  
And look well-pleased upon the sky !

“ But, more than all, far more than all,  
    I see a face bend down to mine —  
    To say its Beauty is divine  
Were nothing ; and it then lets fall  
From its eternal eyes, a flood

Of love, so sorrowful yet deep,  
That I spring up, as I would steep  
My soul therein ; and then comes blood  
From its crown'd brow—a thorny crown—  
Dropping, dropping, solemnly down.  
What feel I then as that red flow  
Streams on me ? A strange heart and mind  
As I myself were all mankind,  
And man—but words are vain to show  
That awful joy ! Oh ! let me go,  
Renewing bliss that will but end  
In greater bliss—O cruel friend !  
Let my heavy eyelids close ;  
Take me back to my repose ! ”

## VII.

Once more, we stood beneath a lowly roof  
Where decent taste and pride strove hard to keep  
The dust and rags of poverty aloof,  
And tried to smile, but only turn'd to weep.  
On a rude chair there sat to write  
One, on whose form her widow's dress,  
Hung like the shadow of the night  
Upon her morning loveliness ;

And by her side, fresh-open'd there,  
    Upon the table's humble deal,  
A pleasant letter written fair,  
    With coronetted seal.

And as she wrote, she turn'd her head  
    Where a young infant lay,  
    With large mild eyes like quiet day,  
On the brown-quilted bed.  
It look'd not strong as mother's glance  
    Should find it—Who can guess  
The cause? 'Twas sickness—or perchance  
    Its little food was less—  
And then it seem'd in pain,—altho'  
Its cry, if ever heard, was low.

She wrote and look'd, and sigh'd and wrote,  
And trembling closed the blotted note ;  
And then she knelt, and raised on high  
The tearful beauty of her eye,  
    And pray'd to have a better will,  
To choose the pure and purse-poor station—  
“ Oh ! lead us not into temptation !  
    Deliver us from ill ! ”

## VIII.

The fair companion by my side  
Gazed deep and sobbingly, and cried,  
“ Here will I stay ! Life *here* were worth  
A long retaste of bitter earth—  
To live for good, to lift a soul,  
To draw it nearer to that goal  
Where I—but wherefore didst thou speak ? ”  
“ I spoke not,” I replied—her cheek  
Grew pale again ; and then—“ I caught  
A whisper’d voice—’twas thine, I thought ;  
But ah ! it was my warning fate,  
‘ Too late,’ it cried, ‘ it is too late !  
Pray only that the thoughts may be  
In living hearts which burn in thee ! ’  
Oh ! may they ! may they ! Now again  
I die to earthly joy and pain.  
I feel as if my fleeting soul  
Were spreading strongly through the whole  
Of all created Life, and yet,  
There lurks a sense that can’t forget  
Itself ; a ray that mixes with the sun ;  
One ranging through the whole—the whole  
encircling one !



Oh ! Love ! great Love !"—then, as a child rejoices  
To visit home, she pass'd ; and the sad air  
Kiss'd from her lips those last sweet words, and bare  
" Oh ! Love ! great Love !" around in myriads of  
small voices.

## IX.

And next, I stood alone, as on my view  
Her words and figure faded off together,  
And I but heard the voice of the rough weather,  
And saw the sky stretch out its solitary blue.

And oft I wander by the drowsy brink  
Of melancholy streams, or through the wood  
Of slumbering forests ; and in sadness think  
Of that—more felt perchance than understood—  
That glorious vision ! and then I  
Sigh—is it sinful so to sigh ?  
That unto me were giv'n  
A better life, or other birth ;  
To wed with such a soul on earth,  
Or look on it in heav'n !

## I V A.

---

### I.

EYES are heavy with sleep,  
Feet are weary of tripping,  
And lips have dived so deep,  
They even have ceased from sipping.

Heigho ;

'The bell doth go

Drowsily, drowsily, to and fro ;  
For all have been merry in full to-night,  
In the very old town of Dronchensteit.

In a very old town you may safely swear  
That very odd things will happen there,  
For strange events and ghosts are few  
Alike in city or room that's new.

The lady of the place that day  
Had given her hand and heart away

To a stranger, who amidst them came  
With a handsome face, and an unknown name.  
He *was* good-looking-enough for the young,  
Rich beyond measure—it pleased the old ;  
Good matrons loved his flattering tongue,  
And fathers of families liked his gold.  
On what the heart loves the head will think,  
So, bent upon food, and earnest in drink,  
They all did honor that very long night  
To the lady Iva of Dronchensteit.

## II.

Since time, or books at least, begun,  
Heroines are handsome, every one.  
Who'd take the trouble to pen a line,  
'Bout crooked shapes and crabbed features  
Belonging to the best of creatures ?  
In mind and form alike divine  
All heroines are, and Iva's mine :

But there's an attribute of woman  
Ere books were writ or minstrels sung,  
Most unheroically common—  
Both plain and pretty have a tongue ;

Since Adam first in Eden walk'd,  
Where men have married, wives have talk'd.

And Iva in this gift was rich,

This virtue, I should say, for well I call

That fault a noble merit which

Saved her from being *quite* angelical.

Feel as you may, explain it as you can,

A perfect woman would not do for man !

### III.

The lamp a shaded lustre shed

In the large chamber, scarce disclosing

The forms, upon the bridal bed,

Of Iva and her lord reposing.

They scarce had laid them down before

Some rapid words the lady utter'd.

Her silence now at least was more

Than could be hoped, when she felt flutter'd,

And threw her thoughts into an exclamation,

Merely to ease the fulness of sensation.

She spoke in question—not a word

The bridegroom utter'd in reply,

And not a single life-sound stirr'd

In that old chamber, broad and high,

Beside each solemn swaying tone  
That mark'd another moment gone.

She moved not, listening for a sound,  
But all was motionless around—  
Then, held her breath with lips comprest,  
And heard the beating of her breast.

“ Oh ! speak, my husband ! ” From without  
There came the last inebriate shout,

That pledg'd the bridegroom and his bride ;  
It scarcely clove the massy wall,  
And like a voice beneath a pall,

In muffled whisper died—  
And then, upon that bridal room,  
There lay the terror of the tomb.

She bent her head aside to hear,  
No breathing rose upon her ear—  
And the hand placed in hers—Oh ! say,  
Why grew it colder as it lay ?

This could not last ; her brain would burst :  
With desperate will, to know the worst,  
She cast the arm aside, and sprung  
To draw the curtain'd folds that hung

In crimson mockery round that funeral bed,  
And the calm lamp-light kiss'd the features of the dead.

## IV.

The sun had climb'd the South, before  
They ventured to uncloset the door—  
Then enter'd—not an answering sound—  
Onward they rush'd in fear, and found  
The bridegroom's corpse outstretch'd beside  
The corpse-like figure of the bride.

With speedy kindness they removed  
What once had been so near and loved,  
And in a far and stately room,  
With light enough to show the gloom,  
They laid the body out, before  
'Twas hid in earth for evermore ;  
But to her always-welcoming eyes,  
As erst his living form would rise,  
So now 'twas memory's useless part  
To hold its image to her heart.

Yet felt she Time dies out with breath,  
And distance is destroyed by death ;

For though no footstep dared intrude  
Upon the solitude she sought,  
She sat as in the neighbourhood  
Of loving look, and voice, and thought :  
As mortal life had flown, so fled  
The hours, but left a sense instead  
Of something still that was not dead.

## V.

Poor Iva ! wretchedly that day  
In fears and fainting pass'd away.  
And when the evening shadows fell,  
She sank in troubled sleep awhile,  
But they who watch'd beside her well  
Could see her pallid features smile :  
She started, for she more than seem'd  
To see her husband as she dream'd.  
His look was solemn, and his tongue  
With slow and earnest accents rung.

“ I could not, when alive with thee  
Explain my being's destiny ;  
But 'tis decreed upon our race,  
When marriages therein take place,

Each wedded male—if eldest born—  
Shall rest from night to early morn,  
And if a certain word be spoken  
By her beside him, instantly  
The chain of life perforce is broken,  
And he a breathless corpse must lie  
Until the second night shall give  
A second chance, and bid him live.  
Thus hope survives unto the third ;  
And if thereon that mystic word  
Shall not be breath'd, *I* live—if said,  
I rest with the unrising dead.”

And wildly Iva pray'd to be  
Inform'd of that one word, which she  
Would shun as 'twere her very grave—  
Sadly the phantom sigh'd, and gave  
A look that warn'd her to be wise ;  
Then vanish'd on her waking eyes.

## VI.

The second night descends upon the heads  
Of the old burghers, lock'd in slumber fast ;  
That evening they went early to their beds  
To make up for the revels of the last.



And Iva in her lonely chamber stood.

It was a fearful moment ; yesternight

'Twas *there* he lay, a thing of breath and blood,

Her heart's own choice, and now—Oh ! were it light !

She thought upon her dream—might that be true ?

'Twas strange, 'twas foolish ; could the unworking  
brain,

Or the stopp'd pulse, its wasted life renew ?

Could the flame light itself ? fond wish and vain !

Then urged by love, she stole away

Where stretch'd in state the body lay,

And pass'd with undisturbing tread

The silent portal of the dead.

With trembling heart and lip, as near

She drew unto that gloomy bier,

In death-like slumber strew'd around,

Upon the pall-encumber'd ground,

The careless watchers lay—Why care ?

Ay ! Iva, start—the body is not there !

None moved—why wake them ? it was strange

That sleep of theirs so deep—'twould seem

To mate her thoughts, which scarce could range

Beyond her own mysterious dream,

And with a wilder'd sense of pain  
She sought the bridal room again.

Entering, a doubtful glance she cast  
    Upon that large and empty bed,  
And every moment as it pass'd  
    Seem'd like a friend that fled.  
That ancient lamp was burning o'er  
Her head as dimly as before ;  
Without, no distant roar was heard,  
    'Twere music, would it now intrude  
Upon that room where nothing stirr'd  
    Its settled solitude,  
Except the funeral clock whose chime  
Bewail'd the constant death of time.

That bed ! how mount it ? should she dare,  
What else might soon be lying there ?  
With every thought her horror grew,  
And fancy wilder pictures drew  
Of what might be from what she knew.  
And standing thus with beating heart  
And wand'ring glance, with sudden start  
She heard the flickering lamp on high

Go out with a convulsive sigh,  
Like his who does not wish to die—  
She had no power to call aloud,  
And the dark-vested night clos'd round her like a  
shroud.

She totter'd to the bed, and there  
Sank down in terror and despair.  
Upon her flash'd with double pow'r  
This solemn truth in that lone hour,—  
“ There's more in death than meets the eye,  
There is a life that cannot die,  
But the stiff limbs, can they”—refrain,  
Iva ! 'twill craze thy youthful brain !  
Yet still recurr'd that thought of fear,  
“ He is not *there*—but comes he *here* ?”  
She listen'd for a sound—none came  
But the quick shuddering of her frame,  
And as for other sense, the sight  
Was blinded by the folds of night.  
More calm she grew, when on her brain  
That mystic vision rush'd again ;  
Half speaking to herself she cried,  
“ Oh ! wert *thou* resting by my side,

No traveller's feet e'er strove to shun  
The city of the plague, as I  
Would force my lips avoid that one,  
That fatal word that bade thee die.  
And can this chance survive for me?  
Doth hope yet live my life to bless?  
This dream, great Heav'n!—Oh! can it be?"  
Then soft and deep,  
As infant's sleep,  
A voice beside her whisper'd, "Yes!"

Arrested by the sound, she lay,  
As fearing or to speak or think,  
Like one who palsied stands by day  
Upon a shelving mountain's brink;  
And next, more welcome than at close  
Of desert noon the welling spring,  
Upon her quicken'd ear arose  
The breathings of a living thing—  
"My husband!"—but she stopp'd in dread  
Of that one word which, haply, said,  
Both life and hope would die again;  
And then, as fearing to destroy  
The present charm, in measured note

She pour'd a low and thankful strain,  
Like little bird that tunes its throat  
From necessary joy—

She stops—why shrieks ?—she bends her eager head  
To catch the living breath—it comes not—he is dead.

## VII.

Slow sinks the faltering night,  
As conscious of the destiny it bore ;  
'Tis the third throw of fate,—  
This done, the die of hope is cast no more ;  
He's lost, or won to life and light,  
And she is blest or desolate !

And Iva in her chamber stood again—  
Not as at first ; great feelings can impart  
More beauty to the body ; the round vein  
Of her high forehead show'd how full the heart,  
And yet the vivid workings of the soul  
Had, through the mortal, mingled the divine,  
But leaving it still mortal, (as when shine  
The lamp-rays through an alabaster bowl,)  
Showing the pow'r of human will that could  
Sway in that delicate pulse the calm obedient blood.

With her own hand she quench'd the light o'er-  
head,  
Then sought with steady foot that mystic bed.  
Some time she lay in thought, and still,  
As firmly gathering up the will,  
Then stretch'd her right hand out—it fell  
Quickly upon a living form.  
She grasp'd a pulse—it beat—'twas warm—  
Then she withdrew her arm, she knew that it was well.

A hand was laid on her's—in vain !  
*It* gave no pressure back again.  
To her brow came the sighing of a breath  
Fanning the disarrangement of her hair ;  
She moved not—there was danger there,  
She spoke not—it was death.  
And a low voice—whose was it ? one alone  
Had such a music in its tone—  
Dropped on her ears, “ Dear Iva, Iva ”—nay !  
Like unimpassion'd marble there she lay,  
And the white-heaving breast show'd her not wholly  
clay.

That voice again complainingly, though mild  
As ever martyr's pray'r who sunk and smiled

Upon his torturer, whisper'd by her side,  
"Iva ! you love me not !" then sobbingly it died.

To her pale brow, like river flood  
That bursts its boundary, rush'd the blood.  
Up on the bridal couch she sprung,  
And the lips, thrown apart,  
Show'd then how readily the tongue  
Would witness for the heart.  
The words stood trembling on the verge,  
But pass'd it not ! and in retreating surge  
The wave of high-urged feeling sought  
Its level, beaten down by thought.

## VIII.

Slowly paced the night away,  
Solemn, still, as starless skies ;  
And the lady Iva lay  
With press'd lips and open eyes,  
Till through the curtain'd folds a golden ray  
Broke in with visible voice and cried, " Exult, 'tis  
day ! "

Up the bridegroom, from the side  
Sprung of the thrice-married bride,

And let in the eager light  
On the black and baffled night ;  
Turning then in reverent mood  
He, the lord of Nature, stood,  
And, subdued by thoughts that felt  
Voiceless in their passion, knelt  
At the feet of her who late  
Had saved the life of love by conquering fate !

## IX.

Let heroes round their temples bind  
Wreaths grown from blood and tears,  
And in one day of slaughter find  
The long renown of years,  
The masters of a dear-bought name,  
Themselves the very slaves of fame !  
Or, let the reasoning mind of man  
The distant realms of ether span,  
And bid insensate matter burn  
With fire from that Promethean urn ;  
On *these* we fix our wond'ring view,  
But plant the heart where first it grew,  
And turn to triumphs nobler far  
Than ever deck'd a Cæsar's ear !



Man walks the image of his God ;  
Yet not to mind is giv'n  
The pow'r to wing above the sod  
Whatever flies at Heav'n.  
With wise ambition wouldst thou share  
The nature of the Angels there,  
And rise the victor of thy life,  
Though men and devils swell the strife !  
Go, conquering and to conquer still,  
In armour of the heart and will—  
'Tis not to *know*, but *be* the whole,  
Which makes the Godhead of the soul !

## X.

Hark to the merry voice of bells confessing  
'Tis of no use to be wise to-night !  
And merrier still are the burghers pressing  
To the old hall of Droncheusteit ;  
They, 'mid their tongues and the wine-cups flowing.  
Felt (not as Iva had felt) time growing  
Grew in regard, and the moments going  
Left but a path for the graceless light !

And from that time whenever there  
Short strife disturb'd a married pair,  
(For Hymen, too, like Cupid, trips  
Sometimes) from the male's ruder lips,  
These words in quaint proverbial song  
    Uncourteously would fall ;  
“ The way for a woman to speak no wrong,  
    Is, never to speak at all ! ”

## ISIS TRIFORMIS.

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Ελέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι οἱ' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνέγματι.

---

HIGH, from the old poetic ground  
A thousand pillars rise around  
In stately beauty ; for I stand  
In that far-fam'd Egyptian land,  
And by the banks of Nile's creative tide  
Who, rising up in darkness, loves to spread  
The watery wealth of his o'er-teaming bed,  
To animate, to raise and bless  
The heart of this great wilderness,  
'Neath the blue veil of Heav'n where suns beam golden-eyed.

But now 'tis night, if such to me  
This soft and quiet hour may be,  
That droops its lids and holds its breath  
In memory of the day-god's death.

The solemn harmony of Time  
Rings out a low and funeral chime,  
To fill the fane of Isis, where I gaze  
On each fair image of the goddess-queen,  
And, travelling on to what hath been,  
I grasp the vanishing skirt of long-departed days.

Queen-goddess ! Isis ! Threefold essence sprung  
Of yearning minds, and vision half-reveal'd !  
High things, not fully known, not quite conceal'd,  
Have pour'd the language of each nation's tongue  
Since the world's primal youth,  
Fed by the vital air of an invisible truth !

If mystic be thy faith, where breathes the man  
Whose thoughtful worship dares to lift,  
Above this thick inferior night,  
His eye with dazzled glance and swift  
Heav'n's mightier energies to scan,  
Nor blinds his reason with celestial Light ?

Isis ! great Isis-Athor ! Love supreme !  
Love infinite, ineffable ! descend,  
And fill my soul with an ecstatic dream  
Shutting out all but thee. Immortal friend !

Unite thee with a mortal !—come !—'tis done !  
Away !—but where to go ? The wo ld and I are one ! (1) \*

All things seem made for me, and in me ; this  
Is more than pleasure. I am very Bliss !  
Its essence and its end—a rapturous sense  
Of an ubiquitous Intelligence,  
That sees all matter, liking what it sees ;  
That feels all passion, loving what it feels ;  
And from the present gathers all degrees  
Of vital being, and which steals  
All that the grave hath stolen—which can pierce  
The womb of the vast future, rife  
With many-fold delights of life ;  
And from all motion and all rest,  
Action or suffering, draw a joy more fierce  
A thousand-fold than the group'd fires that dwell  
In earth's volcanic palaces, to swell  
The multitudinous throbs of my eternal breast ! (2)

Benignant Spirit ! who dost make  
All happiness ; a god and woman thou !  
'Twas wise in him whose fancy could draw out  
So great an excellence, to take

\* See Notes at the end of this Poem.

The diadem of Love, nor doubt  
To fix it on a female brow !

Love feeds on all things ; therefore Love  
Should in a larger circle move,  
And comprehend all things. The mind subdues  
Existence to itself, with boundless views  
Embracing the sky's dome, and the earth's dust,  
Where creeps an insect, or a planet rolls,  
All thought, all senses, and all souls,  
All reverence, and all trust !

Knowledge takes all things in its grasp,  
And holds them forth for Love to clasp—  
When known to Love, Love makes all things  
its own,  
For that which is unloved had better rest unknown !

Thus thou, great Isis-Neith ! dost give<sup>(3)</sup>  
Wisdom to men, that they may live  
Beyond their own immediate being,  
And into kin-creation seeing  
With their illimitable eyes,  
May love whate'er they see, for all who love are wise.

Mild Queen-divinity ! thou dost watch o'er  
Thy mighty river's much-loved shore,  
And gather up the vapoury riches rising  
From its broad waters, and comprising  
The treasure in thy cloudy breast, dost hie,  
To where Nile's sacred fountains lie,  
And feedest there its circling life anew,  
Shedding a thousand rills from the dissolving dew !

Triply divine ! Isis-Neith-Athor ! greatest  
As Isis, for as such thou waitest  
On the tired spirit, when the gates of Death,  
The portals to a larger Birth,  
Shut out the body and its earth,  
But suffer to pass through the fine expiring breath.

Great Wisdom ! greater Love ! alas !  
What claim they but a tear or sigh,  
If, when away this mortal frame shall pass,  
They too must die ?  
Come, gentle goddess ! in this trembling hour ;  
Come ! with thy deepest love, thy noblest pow'r.  
In thy great bosom fold

The panting soul, and waft it where,  
Breathing a more immortal air,  
Itself immortal, but not old—  
With freshen'd health, it shall endure,  
In Wisdom growing great, in Love both great and  
pure !<sup>(4)</sup>

Shall not the mother's arms be cast again  
Around her child, whose shorten'd life  
Was long enough for tears and pain ?  
—And thou, rapt mourner ! Where is fled thy  
wife ?  
How went thy heart, when thou didst lay her  
deep  
In that dug room of noisome earth ?—Arise !  
Stand in the future ! Cease, fond fool, to weep.  
Behold her ! clasp her ! kiss her living eyes !  
What art thou now ? The earth thy sorrow trod,  
Where is it ? Is this joy ? Say, art thou not a god ?

Isis ! strong Monarch ! weeping wife—  
Weeping the death of thy mysterious lord !<sup>(5)</sup>  
Where is Osiris fled ? Say ! what is Life —



What Death, if gods can die? Doth heav'n  
afford

What earth denies?—home for its first-born  
child!

Answer! where thou, in sorrow mild,

Nor made by sorrow less divine,

Pour'st thy eternal woe in Philæ's woody shrine! <sup>(6)</sup>

Was he not slain by Evil? Will he not

Rise over Evil, conquering? But till then

Thou, Goddess-Nature, dost lament for men,  
—Their sicken'd health, their unsufficing lot!

Till then, when he shall make all Life his own

And into joy exalt Creation's deepest groan!

The moon is up, and with a tender kiss

She greets the cheek of Isis, on the height  
Of her old temple-pillars—Whence is this?

Sweet loving moon, whence gettest *thou* thy  
light?

Is it thine own? or is thy course but run

In delegated splendour, which now beams,

Making half-visible all things, as it streams

Drawn from the nobler fount of a more distant sun?

Fair temple ! lone and sorrowfully fair !

I quit thee—hear my parting prayer,  
That I may learn these present thoughts to link

With the dim future's woe or weal ;  
And live in faith, whene'er I think—

In love, whene'er I feel !

## NOTES.

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### NOTE (1).—Page 167.

“When the mind has conceived all it can of beauty, there remains still, in the person of Isis, something beyond. It may be said to be the sum of all the thoughts of man inspired by love, from the Creation. Isis is whatever is, has been, or shall be, and it has been given to no created thing entirely to comprehend her nature.”—*Isis, an Egyptian Pilgrimage*, by James Augustus St. John, vol. i. p. 8.

### NOTE (2).—Page 167.

“I have called the goddess of this temple [Denderah] Athor, the Aphrodite of the Greeks; but in the mystical theology of the Egyptians, this divinity was only another form of Isis, who, contemplated in various lights, was the mother, nurse, preserver, and restorer of all things, in conjunction with Phthah, Ammon, or Osiris.”—*Isis*, vol. ii. p. 83.

### NOTE (3).—Page 168.

“But there is a generation more subtle and refined than that which, in some of its accidents, comes under the cognisance of the senses. I mean, the operation by which, in the womb of intellect, ideas are engendered and multiplied, the one from another, in an infinite series. Over this process, by which the invisible world is peopled, the goddess Neith presided, as Athor presided over whatever was connected with the production of living material beings.”—*Isis*, vol. ii. p. 84.

## NOTE (4).—Page 170.

“Here the loved and lost were found again; here the mother clasped to her arms the infant which had seemed to perish in her earthly embrace; here the husband was joined in eternal union with his beloved wife; here children found again the parents whose eyes they had closed, and of whom they had thought they had taken leave for ever; here the noble and the good received the reward of their piety and virtue; and over this state of beatitude the goddess who brings joy out of sorrow, beauty out of deformity, life out of death—Isis, in one word, reigned supreme.—*Isis*, vol. ii. p. 85.

## NOTE (5).—Page 170.

“Osiris was called the ‘manifestor of good,’ or the ‘opener of truth,’ and said to be ‘full of goodness (grace) and truth.’ He appeared on earth to benefit mankind; and after having performed the duties he had come to fulfil, and fallen a sacrifice to Typho, the evil principle (which was at length overcome by his influence, after his leaving the world), he ‘rose again to a new life,’ and became the judge of mankind in a future state.”—*Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, by Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson, second series, vol. i. p. 320.

## NOTE (6).—Page 171.

“Nowhere in the valley does Isis appear so beautiful as in the sculptures of Philæ. There, whatever way you turn, you behold her serene placid countenance; sometimes smiling on you, sometimes fixed in grief on the remains of Osiris, found piecemeal, and reconstructed as it were by her. . . . . From the depths, therefore, of our own pure religion, and without subjecting our civilization to the dominion of the past, we may still cherish a poetical reverence for Isis; and without at all comprehending the fabulous duality, extend some portion of the feeling to him who sleeps in Philæ.”—*St. John's Isis*, vol. ii. pp. 311, 312.

## MRS. J. E. R—D—E'S DREAM.

*Published in Dublin University Magazine.*

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'Twas very long and very flat,  
The sermon that I heard ;  
And o'er the pew in which I sat  
Sleep hover'd, like a bird,  
With noiseless pinions floating there,  
Upon th' uncirculating air.  
Each ancient phrase upon my ear  
In its dull dropping fell less clear,  
And desk, book, preacher, one by one,  
Died like the light of setting sun ;  
And then, upon my puzzled view  
More broad and deep the pulpit grew.  
With seats ranged over seats, as fit  
For an orchestral band to sit.  
The church a church remain'd, although  
To vast and fluted height  
Its white-wash'd pillars from below  
Sprang upward on the sight ;

The fretted roof stretch'd, dignified  
By wider span, from side to side ;  
The glass with ancient painting glow'd,  
And all things in their aspect show'd  
A huge cathedral, swelling round  
With holy gloom and solemn sound.

But eye had scarcely time to range,  
Or ear to list, ere came a change.  
The grim-toned organ's serious theme  
Stopp'd short, and at its close  
Quick strains of music, as besem  
Th' unsaintly polka, rose.  
And—profanation strange, alas !—  
Burst forth a crescent row of gas,  
To light some hundred couples then—  
Bare-bosom'd girls and neckcloth'd men,  
Sporting, with self-reflected smiles,  
Their persons round through nave and aisles.  
Fingers gripp'd waists, and arms were spread,  
And woman's pleasure-heated head  
On manly breasts sank languishing,  
As round and round in rapid ring

In jumping joy they jugg'd or flew,  
With bob and bend, or whisk and wheel,  
Now forward, backward now—the new  
Terpsichores of toe and heel !

As here and there the dancers ran,  
Amid the crowd I saw a man—  
I mark'd him then, I see him now—  
With courteous mien, and straight dark brow.  
Upon his features graven dwelt  
A history—not a tale to melt  
The heart with pity or with love,  
Or aught that gentler passions move ;  
But in his down-cast smile there gleam'd  
A conscious pow'r of ill, which seem'd  
As if the forming soul within  
Had taken centuries of sin  
To build up an iniquity  
So great, so calm ; and then his eye !  
It had a fearful pow'r to blight  
The flow'rs festoon'd around each light.

As to each female he address'd  
His suit to dance, she rose

At once into his arms—not press'd,  
Nor yet as one who chose,  
But shudd'ring, as if Hope had flitted  
Back to the seat which she had quitted.  
Away, away, away they whirl'd,  
Like slinger's stone in circles hurl'd,  
So swiftly, it were hard to trace  
The woman in the man's embrace ;  
Like following things we see, which run  
Confused by motion into one.  
And when the breathless measure dropp'd  
Its long-sustainèd tone,  
I mark'd where both I thought had stopp'd—  
"Twas wrong—he stood *alone* !  
The distant lights concentred there  
Beam'd on him in a hazy glare ;  
And from his form, as if the touch  
Of those strange limbs was all too much  
For its fair life, each nearer ray  
Slunk dark and hissing away !

When at the long aisle's further end,  
The lights, or distance, seemed to lend  
His look a terrifying hue ;



But still, whene'er he nearer drew,  
He reassumed, with fatal ease,  
The pow'r to force or art to please,  
Which won by their mysterious charms  
Another partner to his arms,  
To tread awhile that dance of fear—  
One breathless whirl—then disappear.

As the last victim, in that race  
For a strange pleasure, pass'd my chair.  
I almost shriek'd, as on her face  
I saw—oh, no !—no *joy* was there,  
But an unhoping sense of fate,  
Which horror held from being hate !  
Quick flash'd across my mind, Should he—  
That man—whate'er he is—ask me !  
Instantly then I saw him turn  
His head around—did the air burn ?  
I thought it scorch'd me—and then rush'd  
A flood of ice through every vein,  
And my whole heart and mind seem'd crush'd—  
A feeling too complete for pain.  
I dared not look—what need for eye ?  
I *knew* that he was standing by,

When every passion, every sense  
Of thought or being grew intense  
With life, then was translated whole  
To him, and left me scarce a soul !

I rose—but why ? I would have given,  
To be chain'd there, aught less than Heav'n.  
“ Oh, spare me !” piteously I cried.  
“ Spare ! Why that word ?” a voice replied ;  
“ 'Tis joy, for you I hope—for me  
I doubt not—yet your choice is free !”  
Free ! when *his* breath was on my face,  
And, grasp'd in an unseen embrace,  
Each limb moved shudd'ring forward ! Worse  
Than all, there was the smiling curse  
Of that calm look, do what I will,  
Through my shut eyes fix'd on me still !  
Up sprung the tune ! It seem'd to mingle  
The shrieks of death-beds in its jingle.  
'Tis time !—“ Yet pray, thou lost one !” Pray !  
In such a presence ! Fool ! away !—  
But strangely then his bending form  
Grew fainter on my eye ;  
And his voice seem'd, like passing storm,

Confusedly to die.

A friendly mist spread o'er the spot,  
And as I look'd, I saw him not,  
But, in his place, the preacher there  
In the tall pulpit ! Where, oh, ! where  
Hath joy been known like what I knew,  
Reclining in that easy pew ?  
"Thank Heav'n, 'tis past !" I faintly sigh'd,  
And some one seated near me, cried,  
In feeling tone, "Yes, madam, yes !  
A tedious sermon, I confess !"

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## NOTE.

The following curious extract is taken from "Notes and Queries," vol. vii. No. 172, p. 152:—

## ANTIQUITY OF THE POLKA.—A NOTE FOR THE LADIES.

The description of the *Lavolta* in Sir John Davies's poem on dancing, *The Orchestra*, (1596,) shows that it must have closely resembled the dance which we fondly boast of, as one of the great inventions of the 19th century. It runs as follows.—

"Yet is there one, the most delightful kind,  
 A lofty jumping, or a leaping round,  
 Where arm in arm two dancers are entwined,  
 And whirl themselves, with strict embracements bound;  
 And still their feet an anapæst do sound;  
 An anapæst is all their music's song,  
 Whose first two feet are short, and third is long."

The "Anapæst" is conclusive; it points exactly to the peculiar nature of the Polka, the pause on the *third* step. Moreover, it appears, that as there is no especial figure for the Polka, so there was none for the *Lavolta*; for it is classed among those dances

"Wherein that dancer greatest praise has won,  
 Which, with best order, ean all order shun;  
 For everywhere he wantonly must range,  
 And turn and wind with unexpected change."

## TO AUGUSTA.

---

WHILE gazing on thy simple face,  
Young scion of a cherish'd tree,  
I fondly strive that map to trace  
Which life will spread for thee.  
Little thy joyous spirit knows  
How barren seems the prospect there,  
Where grow round Pleasure's every rose  
The many weeds of Care !

The world to thee, fair child, is new,  
And from thy heart thy cheek is glad ;  
No sickness yet hath blanch'd its hue,—  
No knowledge made thee sad ;

Thus Nature pours her warmest blush,  
And smiles on insects of the spring,  
Ere winter comes, unfear'd, to brush  
The freshness from their wing.

And so thy spirit's bloom shall fade  
When thou shalt light on rougher days ;  
When blighted hope, and faith betray'd,  
Shall meet, and chill thy gaze.  
Friend then by friend shall be undone,  
(Who grasps his hand shall blast his fame,)  
And woman's heart, by falsehood won,  
Break in the truth of shame !

And thou shalt see affection spurn'd,  
And honour warp'd, and talents sold,  
By those who call'd on Christ, and turn'd  
To worship pow'r, or gold.  
Sin still shall lift its hydra head,  
Maintain'd by force, or work'd by plan,  
As if a moral plague had spread  
O'er the broad soul of man !

Young ! happy ! innocent ! though thou  
Must walk amid this world of pain ;  
Though youth shall fly thy wrinkled brow  
Yet virtue may remain.  
Then wheresoe'er thy lot be tried,  
Whatever sorrows wring that breast,  
Thy mother's footsteps be thy guide,—  
Give up to God the rest !

/

## THE NEW LAND.

---

WHEN Pleasure decks her evening bow'r  
    As bright as Beauty's glance,  
And pours upon the midnight hour  
    The music of the dance,  
Alone, amid the festal band  
    With heavy hearts we stray,  
For our thoughts are in our father-land  
    While we are far away !

And silv'ry voices there shall make  
    Their notes of gladness swell,  
And skilful hands in mirth awake  
    The spirit of the shell.  
*Our* harps, that once so sweetly rung  
    In pleasant days of yore,  
Now lie with silent chords unstrung  
    Upon a foreign shore.



Though clearer skies may shine above,  
And rarer flow'rs below,  
The flow'rs and skies we used to love  
For us no longer glow.  
The ties that bound us then, at first  
From earliest childhood grew,  
And now that those old links are burst,  
Our hearts are breaking too !

At home, each spot of humble green  
With charms too fresh to cloy,  
Was cherish'd deeply as the scene  
Of some recurring joy.  
The simple bliss we tasted there  
Allow'd no better change,  
For here, though nature's face is fair,  
To us that face is strange.

Yet on our hearts, so sad of late,  
Shall pleasure dawn again ;  
We'll turn to those who share our fate,  
Our exile and its pain.

To sorrow's keenest pangs relief  
The balm of friendship brings ;  
Love's ties no change can loose, and grief  
But closer draws the strings.

A mother's arms, a sister's kiss,  
A father's smile invite—  
We'll drown in what we *feel* of bliss  
The *memory* of delight.  
And as with brighten'd looks we gaze  
On each accustom'd face,  
We'll find the home of other days  
Revived in their embrace !

## THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

---

*Τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν.*

---

THE many forms of life he tried,  
That minister to man's delight  
In soft desire, or sterner pride,  
By day or night.

He taught the festal hours to swim  
Upon the tide of song and cup ;  
As pleasure, to the goblet's brim  
Came floating up.

Each manlier sport he knew, when need  
Of nerve was there, or skilful grace ;  
And fearless upon flying steed  
Provoked the chase.

With Science' lore his mind was fill'd ;  
He learnt the tongues of other climes ;  
Or in poetic fit distill'd  
His brain in rhymes.

Fair woman fix'd his fond desire,  
Until his foolish heart became,  
As brought too close unto the fire,  
Burnt by the flame.

But still he found that human bliss,  
Though bright when caught, had ready wing,  
And felt in fortune's sweetest kiss  
Some bitter thing.

The goblet lost its ruby joy,  
And weary Science veil'd her face ;  
And oft-repeated scenes could cloy  
E'en in the chase.

And raven locks grew thin and grey,  
And bloom and blossom faded by,  
And slowly died the light away  
From beauty's eye.

He sought, 'mid shifting grief and bliss,  
A bosom strung with answ'ring tone :  
Though many *friends* were round, in this  
He was alone.

He met with one who more than men  
Reflected both his love and thought ;  
He link'd his life to hers, and then  
Gain'd what he sought.

For there he found, as still he rang'd  
O'er realms of nature and of art,  
An earthly good that never changed,  
In woman's heart.

The heart of woman ! worn and bare  
The words have pass'd from tongue to tongue,  
Till the tired listener turns him where  
New themes are sung.

Though stale the phrase, no phrase can tell  
How fresh remains the blessing given—  
From day to day the manna fell,  
But fell from Heav'n.

So he, more firmly than before,

The earth in holy musings trod,

When sign'd the mystic bond which bore

The seal of God !

## THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE.

---

"O! tu, severi Religio loci."

GRAY.

---

### I.

PRESIDING Spirit! that here  
Dwellest in grandeur, where the living wood  
Waves its old honours, and the mountain-flood  
Speaks thund'ring to the ear!  
Shed thy diviner influence on my breast,  
And calm each lowly thought, each earth-born care to  
rest.

### II.

'Mid rocky heights, ne'er trod  
By step of man, where nature's mould is cast  
Sublimely wild, and beautifully vast,  
The omnipresent God  
Is visibly felt, or in the arrested light  
That struggles through the grove, more eloquent than  
night!

## III.

The fretted ceiling, wrought  
In all the prodigality of art,  
Hath not such pow'r to warm the reasoning heart  
Or lift the earthly thought,  
As the great things of nature, where we see  
The labours of a God, the Master-Deity !

## IV.

But why, severely rude,  
Why does my harder fate forbid my stay  
Among these scenes, and beckon me away  
From this calm solitude  
To the world's stormy sea, where every wave  
Rolls o'er the wreck of Hope, or Pleasure's early grave ?

## V.

Yet, when the stream of Life  
Creeps through the vale of years with feebler tide,  
Oh ! may not then some shelter be denied,  
Far from the weakening strife  
Of human ills that darken to Despair,  
From Passion's madd'ning grasp, or iron tooth of Care !



## CHANT OF THE FREE RIFLES.

---

ARM for your rights, and you  
Then will be strong ;  
They are the feeble who  
Strike for the wrong.  
England, your mother, stirs  
Chafed in her might—  
Up ! then, ye sons of hers,  
Arm for the right !

Stand for your homes ! and be  
Firm as your shore,  
When on its bounds the sea  
Idly doth roar.  
As the waves rear their crests,  
When the war foams,  
Yours be the barrier-breasts—  
Stand for your homes !

For your lives—fire—'tis done !

Who would not bless

Each bullet leaving one

Foeman the less ?

Pray'rs from thy father-land

Upward shall flow,

Falter'd for thee whose hand

Fires on the foe !

Die for thy fame ! and thou

Wilt have lived well—

Requiem o'er thee now

Never may swell.

Friends may not bear thy pall,

Yet mayst thou claim,

Blest, though alone, to fall

Watch'd by thy Fame !

## A LESSON FOR YOUTH.

---

As round and round the taper's light  
The fluttering insect plays,  
Forsakes the sober shades of night,  
And dares the dangerous blaze,

Wouldst thou thy easy help refuse  
To save that thoughtless thing,  
And snatch from fire the thousand hues  
That streak its slender wing?

'Tis thus the man of worldly will  
Leaves God's appointed way,  
And blinds the eye of Reason still  
With Sin's delusive ray.

Thy hand a lesser good hath done,  
Now seek a nobler aim—  
And teach a human soul to shun  
A more enduring flame.

Heav'n's grace shall thank thy high endeavours  
Grace, longer than life's span,  
And wider than the gulf that severs  
The insect from the man.

## SHADES OF LIFE.

---

WHY comes he not, the brave and young,  
Where many crowd to meet him ?  
Why comes he not, when hearts are strung  
With wonted joy to greet him ?

His vessel waits its master's tread,  
But now from us he parted—  
He 'll come when the waters yield their dead,  
The young, and the valiant-hearted !

How died he ? as he plunged to save  
Some drowning wretch before him ?  
Ah ! no—his pinnace met the wave,  
And the gloomy sea went o'er him !

There sank he in our helpless view,  
Not 'mid the tempest's rattle,  
Nor heading on his gallant crew  
In the stormy ranks of battle.

And long thy maiden grief shall be—  
    Hope's disappointed daughter !  
For him who sleeps, how far from thee !  
    Beneath th' inglorious water !

## TO EGYPT.\*

---

How was thy throne exalted, hoary land !

But now, its steps are memories ! Still thou art

Warm with the beatings of a younger heart.

Between the goals of Time I see thee stand,

Flush'd from set suns, and pointing with thy hand

To dawning day, when the old curse shall be

Lifted from off thy spirit, and on thee

Shall rest thy first-born aspect of command.

'Tis not enough for thee to lie reclined

By that blue stream, in faded robe that shrouds

The skeleton of Pow'r, 'neath purple skies—

*Thou*, who didst erst build up thy solemn mind

To such high faith, that round its top the clouds

Floated, dim shadows of a creed more wise.

\* Written for "Isis," by J. A. St. John.





Corolla Persica.

I HAVE elsewhere remarked that some writers imagine the Persian love-songs to contain an esoteric religious meaning. The reader can judge for himself. In making the translations, I have endeavoured to transfuse the (often extravagant) spirit of Persian poetry, rather than to give a literal version.

SADI.

STAR of my being! thou whose ray till now hath  
brightly shone

O'er all the weary waste of Life, to guide and cheer  
me on,

Oh! tell me why those once kind eyes now smile on  
me no more,

And throw a shadow o'er my path it never knew  
before.

Sultana of my heart! fair shrine at which my soul  
bow'd down,

Why are those brows, once arch'd in love, now bent  
into a frown?

The alter'd mien, the averted glance, the cloud upon  
that brow,

Alas! too plainly tell that I am loved no longer now.

Thou lov'st me not ! thou lov'st me not ! and yet I  
cannot fly  
The spell of light that flashes in thine unrelenting  
eye,  
And though despair has chill'd my thought, and madness  
sear'd my brain,  
Still, on the tide of passion rolls through every burning  
vein.

But when my life and woes shall cease, my shade shall  
cross thy course  
To touch, if aught have pow'r to touch, thy spirit with  
remorse,  
And ask thee, if the heart which play'd *one* note of  
love and died,  
Should thus have been so coldly cast with broken  
chords aside !

---

## S A Y I B.

THY thoughts be open as the morn,  
From other's secrets live apart ;  
The curious spirit is a thorn  
To tear thy heart !

Receive no favours, for the tree,  
Bow'd by its fruit, must lose in height.  
Thou, standing like the cypress, be  
Pure and upright.

Why vex thyself with good and ill ?  
These are the fogs of Earth—the soul  
Should, like the sun in ether, still  
Above them roll.

What is the world to thee? The rout  
Of struggling fools may weep or rave—  
A king in thine own house, without  
Thou art a slave !

What more to thee can fortune bring ?

What more chance give thee of delight ?

Adorn thy bow'r at home, and sing

The songs I write.

---

KHAKANEE.

MAID of the jasmine breast ! whose cheek

Is purpled by the tulip's streak,

Whose tresses stain in jetty flow

The silv'ry-rising neck below—

Tell me, stone-hearted girl, for whom

Thy charms reveal their fatal bloom.

Thou walkest forth—a warrior thou—

For Love sits arm'd upon thy brow.

Thou spreadst a never-failing snare,

Thy net of black-descending hair.

Ah ! whose the heart that all in vain

Will strive to rend that slender chain ?

As when in youthful radiance bright  
The Moon first bows her arch of light,  
So, brighter orbs than hers above  
Young Beauty bends the bow of love.  
Alas ! for him, whose breast shall be  
A mark for woman's archery.

From the full cup of chaste desire  
My veins have drunk delicious fire—  
My heart was link'd to thee of old ;  
What time can make its fervour cold ?  
I am the slave that digs the mine—  
The wealth of untouch'd Beauty thine !

---

## HAFIZ.

JOSEPH will come to Canaan's land again,  
Each house of woe outlive its time of pain,  
And hearts rebloom like roses after rain.

Then grieve no more !

E'en shall this feeble breast resume its pow'r,  
As nightingales, when past the blinding show'r,  
Reseek the presence of their red-lipp'd flow'r :

Then grieve no more !

The world goes round, and changes as it goes,  
And o'er the broad earth if a deluge flows,  
Should Noah hold the helm, fear not—repose,

And grieve no more !

I and my state, my rival and his love,  
Are known to God ; and He alone can move  
The things of earth, who shakes the skies above,—

So grieve no more !

Then weep not, Hafiz ! in thy prison-room ;  
No grief exhales between thee and the tomb  
A scent so foul which Pray'r can not perfume —

Oh ! weep no more !



## KHUSROO.

SON of Islam I?—No—no—  
I these shadowy creeds forego.  
Tell me not of Saints above,  
I'm the Infidel of Love!

And the leech comes day by day—  
Witless man of drugs, away!  
'Tis my *heart* that wounded lies,  
Heal it with her pitying eyes.

Love hath sown his pangs like seeds  
In my breast that beats and bleeds;  
Wouldst thou give its culture scope?  
Wet it with the dews of Hope!

Worship idols, do I? Yes,—  
I that glorious crime confess;  
I'd forsake it could I see  
Aught in Heav'n so fair as she!

## H I S A M.

NESTLED in flow'rs I saw two serpents sleeping,  
In sable folds their dangerous length was laid—  
Alas ! alas ! it was the dark locks creeping  
O'er thy fair bosom, soul-seducing maid !

The dimple of thy cheek is more destroying  
Than the deep pit down which young Yúsuf \* fell,  
For, twice a hundred eyes such sight enjoying,  
Would leave a hundred hearts within that well !

What dress for thee ? What garment brightly flowing  
Should clothe thy form ? Despoil a tulip-bed—  
Make of its flow'rs thy vesture—full and glowing,  
And with its buds encrown thy radiant head.

When lovers' strains, convincingly complaining,  
Can touch the heart, or pow'r be theirs, or gold,  
Hope rests with them ; but what for *me's* remaining,  
Poor and unpitied, tongue and bosom cold ?

Yet from my words flows truth, though uninspiring ;  
 Who doubts thy charms would on Judæa's sod  
 Have scorn'd the wonders which the world admiring  
 Saw Isàa do, the Christians' martyr-God !

---

To me and to my heart alone  
 How oft for thee we sigh is known ;  
 How oft we sob and sigh for thee,  
 Is known but to my heart and me !  
 O Lady, learn what I endure,  
 Ere knowledge come, too late to cure !

---

M U H M O O D.

LIKE grain the mole upon thy neck,  
 Like nets are spread thy tresses there ;  
 A silly bird that flew to peek  
 The seed, was taken in the snare.  
 Say, should it break its chain, or be  
 Content with that captivity ?

H A F I Z.

WHAT woe is this? What strife is here  
Which 'neath the moon I see?  
For help, a blow; for smiles, a tear;  
The world's perplexity!  
By brother, brother is undone,  
And father frowns upon his son!

I see by coarse pack-saddle vext  
The Arab charger pass,  
While graced with golden collar next  
Stalks by the princely ass.  
Fools quaff red goblets, but the wise  
Feed only on their tears and sighs.

I give thee counsel—poor in pelf—  
Soon heard, soon understood;  
Do justice only to thyself,  
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